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Francis of Assisi
The little flowers of St. Francis
of Assisi.

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**THE LITTLE FLOWERS
OF ST. FRANCIS
AND
THE LIFE OF BROTHER GILES**

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Born, at Assisi	c. 1182
Died	3 Oct. 1226

The Little Flowers of Saint Francis was compiled in Italian or Latin by an unknown writer in the fourteenth century from the Latin Actas B. Francisci et Sociorum ejus, which dates from about 1320 or 1330. The translation into English verse by James Rhoades was first published in The World's Classics in 1925 and reprinted in 1934, 1947 and 1949.

TO ALL LOVERS
OF
SAINT FRANCIS,
AND ESPECIALLY
TO MY FRIEND,
LOUIS N. PARKER,
TO WHOM I OWE
THE FIRST SUGGESTION
OF THIS
EXPERIMENT IN VERSE.

For friendship's sake,—not quitance of the debt
Friend owes to friend—is this poor offering made;
For love's due cannot save with love be met,
Nor friendship but by friendship be repaid.

1. 5111324

AT PERUGIA

THE young moon mounts ; day fades from off the plain ;
No colour of man's naming hath this sky.
Thrilled with the Beatific Vision nigh,
So passes a pure spirit without pain.
Like billows of a never-breaking main,
The Umbrian Apennines hang poised on high,
Snow-crested : yonder doth Assisi lie,
Lov'd shrine, whereof the whole world's heart is fain

So there from hill to hill was wont to wend,
And heal, and teach, and touch with living fire,
Francis, God's Saint, six hundred years ago !
And thou and I have six poor days to spend,
Tread back the past, and to yon heights aspire—
Move slow, dear earth, about the sun, move slow !

AT ASSISI

I

Not thus should he be sepulchred, not thus—
A'msman of God, and spouse of Poverty—
Where fane crowns fane, a pillared praise on high,
By Masters of renown made glorious.
So men of old revered him : but to us
Strange and unmeet it seems that he should lie
Where day by day with travel-jaded eye
Crowds turn to gaze, and critic-tongues discuss.

For pomp and splendour irked him : a bare shrine
Rude and rock-bedded—the blue dome above—
Sufficed his soul for worship : he did love
To talk with birds and flowers, nor seldom trod
Far from man's haunt the cloud-cowled Apennine,
To be alone with God—alone with God.

II

To stoop in self-abasement to the earth,
Not to need happiness, to shun no pain,
In weakness to find strength, in losses gain,
All things in nothingness, and wealth in dearth,
Yea, and by daily death win spirit-birth—
The Vision of the Unseen to sight made plain—
Saint of Assisi, though men doubt thee sane,
This was thy wisdom, this thy glorious worth.

O Lowliness of Soul, whose inward sway
Is Peace and Resignation, with the slow
Sure backward-ebbing of the waves of woe,
Henceforth and from this hour do thou, we pray,
Sit at the heart's helm, pilot us our way,
As from the known to the unknown we go !

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LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS

I

HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED BERNARD OF ASSISI

Of Francis, glorious Saint, consider first
How that in all his life-deeds he was made
Conformable to Christ: for even as Christ
Did at the outset of His ministry
Choose twelve Apostles to spurn worldly things
Each one, and follow Him in poverty
And other virtues, so Saint Francis, first
Founding his Order, chose companions twelve,
Men dowered with deepest poverty. And as
One of Christ's twelve Apostles, being of God
Found reprobate, at last did hang himself,
So of Saint Francis' twelve companions one,
Who Brother John o' the Chapel had to name,
Turn'd recreant, hanged himself at last. And this
To God's Elect a great ensample is
And matter for humility and fear,
Considering this, that no man in God's grace
Is certain to perséver to the end.
And as the holy Apostles wonders were
To all the world for sanctity, and filled
With the Holy Spirit, even so were those
Most holy followers of Saint Francis men
Of such deep sanctity, that from the time

4 HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED

Of the Apostles until now, the world
Ne'er held so marvellous and saintly men :
Seeing that one of them was rapt aloft
To the third heaven, as was Saint Paul, and this
Was Brother Giles ; and one of them—the same
Being Brother Philip Lungo—on his lips
Was by an Angel touched with coal of fire,
As was the Prophet Isaiah : one of them,
To wit Brother Silvester, spake with God
Like unto Moses, as friend speaks with friend :
And one by subtlety of intellect
E'en to the light of divine wisdom soared,
As did that eagle, John Evangelist ;
And this was Brother Bernard, of all hearts
Most humble, who to its profoundest depth
Laid bare the Holy Scripture : one of them
Was made a Saint by God, and canonized
In heaven, yet living in the world ; and he
Was of Assisi, born of gentle blood,
Brother Ruffino : and thus each and all
Were with peculiar sanctity endowed,
As by the sequel is made manifest.

Of the companions of Saint Francis first
Was Brother Bernard of Assisi, who
On this wise gat conversion. While as yet
Saint Francis was in laic garb, albeit,
The world e'en now despised, he went about
The butt of all men's scorn, and in such sort
By penance mortified, that he was deemed

A fool by many, and mocked at as one mad,
And driven away with stones and foul despite
Of kinfolk and of aliens, and when he
Bore him amid all injury and contempt
Patient the while, as he were deaf and dumb,
Then Bernard of Assisi, being amongst
The noblest of the city, and wealthiest,
And wisest, of his wisdom began note
This in Saint Francis so exceeding scorn
O' the world, and so great patience under wrong,
That now, albeit two years by every man
Detested and despised, he ever seemed
More steadfast-patient—'gan, I say, to think
And commune with himself: 'It cannot be
But that this Francis hath great grace of God':
And so he bade him sup with him and lodge
That night: whereto agreeing, Saint Francis supped
And lodged with him. And Bernard thereupon
Resolved in heart to watch his sanctity,
And thereto caused prepare for him a bed
In his own chamber, where by night a lamp
Burned ever. And Saint Francis, to conceal
His sanctity, so soon as he was come
Within the chamber, threw him on the bed,
And made a show of sleeping: and likewise
Bernard lay down, and in a little while
'Gan loudly snore, as if he slept full fast.
Whereat Saint Francis, deeming that indeed
Bernard now slept, in the first hush of night
Rose up from off his bed, and fell to prayer,

And, raising eyes and hands aloft to heaven,
With deepest fervour and devotion cried :
' My God, my God ! ' continuing in these words
Instant, with bitter tears, till dawn of day,
Ever, and naught beside, ' My God, my God ! '
Repeating : and these words Saint Francis spake,
Thinking with wonder of the excellence
Of Majesty Divine, which deigned look down
From heaven upon a dying world, and through
Francis, His little poor one, purposed
For his own soul and others to provide
A healing of salvation. Therefore now
Illumed by spirit of prophecy to foresee
The mighty things which God would bring to pass
Through him, and through his Order, and withal
Musing of his own insufficiency
And little worth, he cried to God in prayer
That of His goodness and omnipotence,
Without which human frailty nothing can,
He would aid, supplement, accomplish that
Which of itself availed not. Bernard then
These gestures of Saint Francis, so devout,
By the lamp's light beholding, and himself
Devoutly musing on the words he spake,
Was by the Holy Spirit touched, inspired,
To change his life : wherefore, when dawn appeared,
He called Saint Francis, and bespake him thus :
' O Brother Francis, I within my heart
Am wholly purposed to forgo the world,
And follow thee in all that thou shalt bid.'

Saint Francis, hearing it, grew glad of soul,
And said : ' Thou speak'st, O Bernard, of a thing
So great and hard to compass, one would fain
Seek counsel first of our Lord Jesu Christ,
Beseeching Him make plain His will herein,
And teach us how perform it. Let us then
Both to the Bishop's, where is a good priest,
And bid say Mass, and afterward in prayer
Continue until Tierce, entreating God
That He, through opening of the Missal thrice,
May point the path which He would have us choose.'
And Bernard answered that it liked him well.
So they at once set forward, and anon
Came to the Bishop's : and when now, Mass heard,
They had in prayer been instant until Tierce,
The priest, at bidding of Saint Francis, took
Missal in hand, and thereto having made
The sign o' the Cross, anon did open it
Thrice, in the name of Jesu Christ our Lord.
At the first opening was revealed that word,
Christ to the young man in the gospel spake,
Who to perfection asked Him of the way :
' Wouldst thou be perfect, go sell that thou hast,
And give unto the poor, and follow Me.'
At second opening was that word revealed,
Christ spake to His Apostles, when to preach
He sent them forth : ' Take nothing for the way,
Staff, scrip, nor shoes, nor money,' willing so
To learn them that for bodily life they must
In God hope wholly, have for their whole aim

To preach the blessed gospel. At the third
Opening of missal was that word revealed
Christ spake : ' If any will come after Me,
Let him deny himself, take up his cross,
And follow Me.' Whereat Saint Francis said
To Bernard : ' Lo ! the counsel given to us
Of Christ ! go then, and to the uttermost
Perform the thing which thou hast heard ; and blest
Be our Lord Jesu Christ who hath herein
Vouchsafed to shew us of His gospel-way.'
And Bernard, hearing this, went forth and sold
All that he had—and he was very rich—
And with great joy his goods distributed
To poor men, widows, orphans, monasteries,
Pilgrims, and hospitals ; in all which things
Saint Francis prudently and faithfully
Did aid him. And a certain man by name
Silvester, seeing Saint Francis to the poor
Such sums of money give, or cause to give,
Straitened with avarice to Saint Francis said :
' Thou hast not fully paid me for those stones
Which, to repair the church, thou bought'st of me :
Now therefore that thou hast the money, pay.'
Then marvelling at his greed, and wishing not
To strive with him, Saint Francis, as a true
Servant of holy gospel, thrust his hands
In Bernard's bosom, and with money filled,
And in Silvester's bosom placed it, saying
If more he wished for, he would give him more :
Wherewith content, Silvester turned away,

And to his house betook him : and at eve
 Thinking of that day's work, and self-accused
 For his own avarice, as of Bernard's zeal
 He pondered, and Saint Francis' sanctity,
 The following night, and other twain beside,
 He had from God a vision, and it was this :
 That from Saint Francis' mouth a cross of gold
 Issued, whose summit touched the sky, whose arms
 Stretched even from the East unto the West.
 Moved by which vision, for the love of God
 He gave away his substance, and became
 A Minor Brother, and of such sanctity
 And grace in the Order, that he spake with God,
 As one friend with another ; the which oft proved
 Saint Francis, as hereafter shall appear.
 And Bernard likewise had of God such grace,
 That to God's presence he was oft-times rapt
 In contemplation ; who, Saint Francis said,
 Was worthy of all reverence, and had been
 The founder of his Order ; seeing that he
 Had first forgone the world, reserving naught,
 But giving all unto the poor of Christ,
 And entered on the gospel-poverty,
 Presenting himself naked to the arms
 O' the Crucified ; whose name be blest by us
 For ever and for evermore. Amen.

II

HOW SAINT FRANCIS WENT TO
SPEAK WITH BROTHER BERNARD

THE most devout thrall of the Crucified,
Saint Francis, had through penances severe,
And ceaseless weeping, become wellnigh blind,
And saw but little. Amongst other times
Once it befell that he from where he lodged
Set forth, and journeyed to a certain place
Where Brother Bernard was, to talk with him
Of things divine. And, coming to the place,
He found he was at prayer within the wood,
Wholly uplifted and joined fast to God.
Thereat Saint Francis went into the wood
And called him : ' Come and speak to this blind man. '
And Brother Bernard answered him no word,
For being a man of contemplation deep,
His mind was rapt from earth to God in heaven.
And since he had rare grace to speak of God,
As erst Saint Francis many a time had proved,
He longed the more to talk with him. Anon,
After some little space, a second time
He called him, and a third, the selfsame way ;
And neither time did Brother Bernard hear,
And therefore answered not, nor came to him :
Whereat Saint Francis, half disconsolate,
Marvelled and left him, chafing inwardly,

That Brother Bernard, though he called him thrice,
Had come not: and, departing with this thought,
Saint Francis, now some little way withdrawn,
To his companion said: ' Await me here,'
And gat him to a lonely place hard by,
And fell to prayer, beseeching God reveal
Why Brother Bernard had not answered him.
And, as he prayed, there came a voice from God,
Which spake on this wise: ' O poor little man,
Why art thou troubled? Should a mortal leave
God for the creature? Lo! fast-joined to Me
Was Brother Bernard, when thou called'st him,
And could not therefore come, nor answer thee:
Then marvel not he could not answer, seeing
He was so far transported from himself,
That of those words of thine he heard not one.'
Saint Francis, having this reply from God,
To Brother Bernard with all haste returned,
In lowly self-arrainment to confess
The thought he had toward him: whom so soon
As he saw coming, Brother Bernard went
To meet him, and fell prostrate at his feet:
Whereat Saint Francis, bidding him arise,
Told him full meekly of the thought he had,
And fret of heart to-him-ward, and how God
Had answered him therein; and ended thus:
' By holy Obedience I command thee do
What I shall bid thee.' Brother Bernard then
Fearing Saint Francis, as was oft his wont,
Some act extravagant should impose on him,

Would fain, so might he without fault, have shunned
The said Obedience—therefore answered thus:
' I thine Obedience am content to do,
So thou wilt promise to do mine.' And when
Saint Francis promised, Brother Bernard said,
' What is it, Father, thou wouldest have me do ? '
Then spake Saint Francis : ' I require of thee
By holy Obedience, as the punishment
Of this my pride and arrogance of heart,
When I have cast me backward on the ground
Plant one foot on my neck, one on my mouth,
And thus from side to side pass over me
Three times, with words of contumely and scorn,
Saying in chief : " Lie there, thou base-born son
Of Peter Bernardone ! Whence to thee
Cometh such insolence that art so vile
A creature ? " ' Brother Bernard hearing this,
Albeit full loth to do him that despite,
Yet for the sake of holy Obedience,
With what best courtesy he could, fulfilled
The charge Saint Francis gave him : and, this done,
' Now,' quoth Saint Francis, ' lay on me the task
Which thou requirest of me, seeing that I
Have promised to obey thee.' Whereupon
Quoth Brother Bernard : ' I require of thee
By holy Obedience, whensoe'er we meet,
Thou chide and rate me harshly for my faults.'
At the which word Saint Francis marvelled sore,
For such was Brother Bernard's sanctity,
That him in utmost reverence he held,

TO SPEAK WITH BROTHER BERNARD 13

Nor worthy deemed of blame in anything.
Wherefore it came to pass, from that time forth,
Saint Francis for the said Obedience' sake
Shunned to be much with him, that word of blame
Might ne'er by him be spoken against one
He knew to be of such high saintliness.
But when he wished to see him, or to hear
Discourse of God, he with what speed he might
Would leave him and be gone. It was a thing
Right worshipful to witness with what love,
Meekness, and reverence, both of word and deed,
Saint Francis, holy Father, did entreat
His first-born, Brother Bernard.

To the laud

And glory of Christ Jesu, and withal
Of Francis, His poor little one. Amen.

III

HOW BROTHER ELIAS WAS QUESTIONED BY AN ANGEL AND ANSWERED PROUDLY

IN the beginning, and at the Order's birth,
When were few Brothers, and as yet they had
No settled habitations, it befell
That once Saint Francis, on devotion bent,
Bound for Galicia and Saint James's shrine,
Took with him certain Brothers, of whom one
Was Brother Bernard. And, as thus they fared
Along the road together, so it was
That, coming to a certain place, he found
A poor sick man, for whom with pity moved,
He said to Brother Bernard : ' Son, I will
That here thou tarry, this sick man to tend.'
And Brother Bernard, meekly kneeling, bowed
His head, and from the holy Father's lips
Received the said Obedience, and there stayed :
And with the rest Saint Francis journeyed on
Toward Saint James's. And, arriving there,
As night-long in the church Saint Francis prayed
It was of God revealed to him that he
Of many a place throughout the world must win
Possession, seeing his Order was to spread
And swell into a mighty multitude
Of Brethren : by which revelation led,

Saint Francis straightway 'gan possession win
Of places in those regions, and at length,
By the same way returning whence he came,
Found Brother Bernard there, and the sick man,
With whom he had left him, perfectly made whole.
Wherefore Saint Francis did permission give
To Brother Bernard the next year to go
Unto Saint James's. And, with that, returned
Saint Francis to Spoleto's vale, and there
In a lone place he sojourned, and with him
Brother Masseo, Brother Elias too,
And certain others, the which one and all
Gave right good heed to hinder not, nor let,
Saint Francis from his praying: and this they did
For the great reverence which they bore to him,
And knowing that God would oft, the while he prayed,
Shew him of mighty matters. And one day,
Saint Francis being at prayer within the wood,
Behold! a fair youth, as for travel dight,
Came to the House-door, and so hotly knocked,
And long, and loudly, that the Brethren all
At such unwonted knocking were amazed.
Went Brother Masseo and undid the door,
And to the youth said: 'Whence art thou, my son?
Methinks that never wert thou here till now,
To knock so strangely.' And the youth replied:
'How should one knock, then?' Brother Masseo said:
'Knock thrice, with pauses between knock and knock,
Then tarry till the Brother shall have time,
A Paternoster said, to come to thee:

And, if by then he come not, knock once more.'
And the youth answered : ' In sore haste am I,
And therefore knock so loudly, being bound
On a long journey: and I hither came
To speak with Brother Francis, but he stays
Within the wood, in contemplation wrapt,
And I were loth molest him. But go tell
Brother Elias I would put to him
A question, for I hear he is full wise.'
So Brother Masseo did the message bear
That Brother Elias to that youth should go ;
But go he would not, being wroth thereat.
Then Brother Masseo wist not what to do,
Nor how to answer him : since, if he said
That Brother Elias could not come, he lied ;
If, that for wrath he would not, he feared set
An ill ensample. And, as now so long
Brother Masseo lingered his return,
The youth once more 'gan knocking, as at first :
And Brother Masseo to the door returned
After a little stay, and said to him :
' Thou hast not in thy knocking heeded that
I taught thee.' And the youth thereto replied :
' Brother Elias will not come to me :
Go then, tell Brother Francis that I came
To speak with him, but seeing that I were loth
Break in upon his prayer, bid him instead
Send Brother Elias to me.' Thereupon
Went Brother Masseo to Saint Francis, who
Was praying in the wood with face upturned

To heaven, and told him the youth's errand, all,
And Brother Elias' answer. Now that youth
God's Angel was in human form. Thereat
Saint Francis, neither moving from his place
Nor letting droop his countenance the while,
Replied to Brother Masseo : ' Hie thee back,
Bid Brother Elias, for Obedience' sake,
Go to that youth and tarry not.' And when
He heard Saint Francis' bidding, to the door
Strode Brother Elias, mightily incensed,
And, with great force and bluster opening it,
Said to the youth : ' What wilt thou ? ' He replied :
' Brother, take heed thou be not stirred to wrath,
As now thou seemest, seeing that anger snares
The soul, nor suffers it discern the truth.'
Said Brother Elias : ' Tell me what thou wouldest
With me.' Replied the youth : ' I ask of thee
If it be lawful for the followers
Of Holy Gospel of such things to eat
As shall be set before them, even as Christ
Bade His Disciples : and I further ask
If any man have right to lay on them
Aught that impugns the gospel liberty.'
And Brother Elias haughtily replied :
' This I know well, but will not answer thee :
Get thee about thy business ! ' Said the youth :
' I should know better how to answer this
Than thou.' Then Brother Elias waxed full wroth,
And shut the door with fury, and was gone.
Anon of the said question he began

To ponder, and have doubts within himself,
And knew not how to solve it ; seeing that he,
As Vicar of the order, had laid down
And stablished as an ordinance—thereby
Out-gospelling the gospel, and the Rule
Out-ruling of Saint Francis—that within
The Order should no Brother taste of flesh ;
So that that question was full-aimed at him.
Wherefore, not knowing how to clear himself,
And weighing the youth's modesty, and how
He said he could a better answer give
Than that himself had given, back to the door
He turned, and opened it, to ask the youth
Of the aforesaid question : but behold !
He was already gone, because the pride
Of Brother Elias all unworthy was
To parley with the Angel. And, this done,
Saint Francis, to whom everything had been
Revealed of God, from out the wood returned,
And loudly with uplifted voice rebuked
Brother Elias, saying : 'Thou dost ill,
Proud Brother Elias, to drive hence from us
The holy Angels, who come hitherward
For our admonishment. I say to thee
That I fear greatly lest that pride of thine
Should from this Order oust thee at the last.'
And, as Saint Francis thus foretold to him,
So it befell thereafter, for he died
Outside the Order.

On the selfsame day,

And at that hour whenas the Angel thence
Departed, in like semblance he appeared
To Brother Bernard from Saint James's shrine
Returning, and now standing on the brink
Of a great river, and saluted him
In his own tongue, and said: ' God give thee peace,
Good Brother ! ' And Brother Bernard marvelling,
And musing on the beauty of the youth,
And his own native accent, and withal
The peaceful greeting, and glad countenance,
Inquired of him: ' Good youth, whence comest
thou ? '

The Angel answered: ' From yon place I come
Wherein Saint Francis sojourns ; and I went
To speak with him, and could not, seeing that he
Was musing in the wood on things divine,
And I would not molest him. In that place
Dwells Brother Masseo too, and Brother Giles,
And Brother Elias: yea, and I was taught
Of Brother Masseo at the door to knock,
As do the Brothers: but to my questioning
Would Brother Elias yield me no reply
Whereof thereafter he repented him,
And would have seen and hearkened unto me,
But could not.' After this, the Angel said
To Brother Bernard: ' Wherefore dost thou not
Cross over ? ' Brother Bernard answered him:
' Because I fear the danger, for the depth
Of water that I see.' The Angel said:
' Cross we together, and have thou no doubt ! '

Therewith he took his hand, and planted him,
Even in an eye-wink, on the further side.
Then Brother Bernard knew it was indeed
God's Angel, and in reverence and deep joy
Cried with uplifted voice : ' O blessed One,
Angel of God, make known to me thy name ! '
The Angel answered : ' Wherefore askest thou
My name, the which is Wonderful ? ' And when
He had so said, the Angel disappeared,
Leaving him greatly solaced, in so much
That all that road he travelled with good cheer,
Still musing of the day and hour, wherein
The Angel had appeared to him. And so
Arriving where Saint Francis at that time
With his companions, as aforesaid, dwelt,
He told them, all in order, everything :
Then knew they surely that to them and him
The selfsame Angel had that day and hour
Appeared : and they gave thanks to God. Amen.

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IV

HOW BROTHER BERNARD WAS SENT TO BOLOGNA

SEEING that Saint Francis and his fellowship
Were called of God and chosen in heart and deed
To bear the Cross of Christ, and preach the same,
So both in outward garb and austere life,
So in the deeds and labours of their hands,
They seemed to be, and were, men crucified :
And therefore would they rather suffer shame
And insult for Christ's love, than of the world
Win reverence, or men's worship and renown.
Nay, wrongs rejoiced them, honours made them sad ;
So, wending through the world as pilgrim-folk
And strangers, they bare naught about with them,
Saving Christ crucified : and seeing they were
True branches of the true Vine, which is Christ,
Great fruit of souls and goodly brought they forth,
The which for God they won.

It came to pass
That Brother Bernard, when the Rule began,
Was by Saint Francis to Bologna sent,
That there, according to the grace vouchsafed
Of God to him, he might bear fruit to God :
Whereat for holy Obedience he set forth,
Making the sign of the most holy Cross,
And to Bologna came. And, seeing him clad

In vile and uncouth garb, the children there
Did him foul scorn and manifold despite,
As though he were a fool: and patiently
Would Brother Bernard, and with cheerfulness,
Bear every torment for the love of Christ:
Nay, that he might be mocked of them the more,
He of set purpose to the city-square
Betook him, so that many, as there he sat,
Flocking about him, boys alike and men,
Some from behind, and others from before,
Plucked at his hood; and some threw dust at him,
Some stones, some pushed him this way, and some that.
But Brother Bernard, ever of one mien,
And patient ever, with joyful countenance,
Nor chafed thereat, nor changed; and many a day
Thither returned he, the like things to bear.
And seeing that patience is perfection's work,
And warranty of virtue, a wise man
And learnèd of the law—when he beheld
And marked such virtue and such constancy
In Brother Bernard, as that all those days
Nor insult, nor despite, could anger him—
Said to his own heart: 'Verily this needs
Must be a holy man!' And, coming up,
He asked: 'Who art thou, and what brings thee
here?'

And brother Bernard, for reply thereto,
Thrust hand in bosom, and plucking forth the Rule
Writ by Saint Francis, gave it him to read:
Who, having read it, and considered well

The high perfection of its excellence,
In utmost wonder and amazement turned
And said to his companions : ‘ Of a truth,
This of religion is the loftiest state
That e’er I heard of : therefore too this man
And his companions are, of all this world,
The holiest : and, who wrongs him, sorely sins :
Whom rather in high honour should we hold,
Seeing that he is a true friend of God.’
To Brother Bernard turned he then, and said :
‘ Would ye possess you of a House, wherein
To serve God fitly, this with right good will
I for my soul’s salvation will bestow.’
And Brother Bernard answered him : ‘ Good Sir,
Methinks this word into thy heart was breathed
By our Lord Jesu Christ : and therefore I
Right willingly accept the proffered gift,
Unto Christ’s honour.’ The said lawyer then
To his own home with gladness, lovingly,
Brought Brother Bernard, and the promised House
Gave him, and made all ready, and garnished it
At his own charges, and thenceforth became
The father and chief champion both of him
And his companions. Brother Bernard too
Now by his holy walk began to earn
Much honour of the people, so that he,
Who did but win to touch or look on him,
Deemed himself blessed : but himself the while,
True, meek disciple as he was, of Christ
And of the lowly Francis, grown afraid

24 HOW BERNARD WAS SENT TO BOLOGNA

Lest the world's honour his soul's peace and health
Should hinder, on a day departing thence
Returned unto Saint Francis, and said thus :
' Father, the House is ready to our need
Within Bologna's city, and do thou
Send Brothers to maintain it and there stay :
Since I no more could profit me therein ;
Nay, for the too much honour done to me,
My loss, I fear, was greater than my gain.'
Thereat Saint Francis, hearing everything
In order, even as God had brought to pass
Through Brother Bernard, rendered thanks to God—
Who now in such wise 'gan to spread afar
The little poor ones of the Cross—and then
Of his companions to Bologna sent
And Lombardy, the which in divers parts
Did many Houses of the Order found.

To the good Jesu's honour and praise. Amen.

V

CONCERNING THE BLESSED DEATH
OF BROTHER BERNARD

SUCH sanctity in Brother Bernard was,
That him Saint Francis in high reverence held,
And many a time would praise him. On a day,
Saint Francis being upon devotion bent
And praying, it was revealed to him of God
That Brother Bernard by divine consent
Must many a shrewd assault of demons bear.
Whereat Saint Francis, having tender ruth
For the said Brother Bernard, whom he loved
As his own son, for many a day with tears
Made supplication unto God for him,
Commending him to Jesu Christ, that He
Would grant him victory o'er the Evil One.
And, as Saint Francis thus devoutly prayed,
One day God answered : ' Francis, fear thou not,
For all the assaults, that must encountered be
By Brother Bernard, are of God allowed,
To prove his virtue, and to crown his worth :
And over all his enemies at the last
Shall he have victory, seeing that he is one
Of the guest-fellows of the realm of God.'
At which reply Saint Francis had great joy,
And gave God thanks, and from that hour in love
And reverence held him ever more and more ;

Nor only in his life shewed forth the same,
But in death also ; for, as death drew nigh,
Saint Francis, like the holy Patriarch
Jacob, inquired of his devoted sons,
Who sorrowed round him, and with many tears
Wept for the passing of so loved a sire,
'Where is my first-born ? Come to me, my son,
Come that my soul may bless thee, ere I die.'
Thereat spake Brother Bernard privily
To Brother Elias, who was at that time
The Vicar of the Order : 'Father, go,
That he may bless thee, to the Saint's right
hand' :

And Brother Elias to his right hand went :
And lo ! Saint Francis, who with eyes o'er-wept
Had lost his vision, placing his right hand
On Brother Elias, answered : 'This is not
The head of Brother Bernard, my first-born.'
Then Brother Bernard to his left hand went,
Whereat Saint Francis, with arms cross-wise held,
Placed his right hand on Brother Bernard's head,
His left on Brother Elias, and thus spake
To Brother Bernard : 'O my son, may God,
The Father of our Lord Jesu Christ, vouchsafe
With all celestial blessings of the soul
In Christ to bless thee ! even as thou art
The first-born in this holy Order, chosen
To yield ensample of the Gospel-life,
And follow Christ in gospel poverty ;
Since not alone thou gavest what was thine,

And didst among the poor distribute it
Wholly and freely for Christ's love, but eke
Within this Order offeredst God thyself,
A sacrifice of sweetness. Be thou then
Both of our Lord Christ Jesu and of me,
Poor little one, His servant, from henceforth
With everlasting benediction blest,
Going and staying, waking and asleep,
Living and dying: whoso blesseth thee
Be filled with blessings, as who curseth thee
Shall rest not without punishment. Be thou
Chief of thy Brethren, and to thy command
Let all the Brothers bow: have thou full power
To take into this Order whom thou wilt:
No Brother have lordship over thee: be free
Of thy good pleasure to depart or stay.'
After Saint Francis' death the Brethren loved
And reverenced Brother Bernard, as indeed
An honoured Father: and, when near his end,
To him from divers regions of the world
Came many Brethren, and amongst them came
The holy and angelic Brother Giles;
Who soon as Brother Bernard he beheld
With right good cheer cried: 'Sursum corda.' Then
Gave holy Brother Bernard secret charge
That one of the Brothers should for Brother Giles
Prepare a place for meditation meet:
And it was done. And Brother Bernard, now
Being at point to die, bade raise him up,
And to the Brethren, who before him stood,

28 THE DEATH OF BROTHER BERNARD

Spake upon this wise : ‘ Brothers well-beloved,
I will not speak to you in many words.
But ye must bear in mind that yours is still
The state religious which erewhile was mine ;
And that which I have now, ye too shall have
Hereafter. Further in my soul I find
That for a thousand worlds like unto this
I would not choose to have served other Lord
Than our Lord Jesu Christ. For all faults done
I do accuse me and confess the same
Unto my Saviour Jesu, and to you,
And I beseech you, Brothers mine most dear,
Have love for one another.’ And these words
Ended, with other admonitions good,
He laid him back upon the bed, and lo !
His face grew radiant with a wondrous joy,
So that the Brethren greatly marvelled all :
And in that joyfulness, with glory crowned,
His saintly spirit from this present life
To the blest life of angels passed away.
Unto the glory and the praise of Christ.

VI

HOW SAINT FRANCIS KEPT LENT
ON AN ISLAND OF THE LAKE
OF PERUGIA

THE holy Francis, honoured thrall of Christ,
Being in certain matters, as it were,
Another Christ, vouchsafed unto the world
For men's salvation, 'twas the will of God
The Father to conform in many acts
And fashion him to the similitude
Of His dear Son, Christ Jesu ; as was seen
Both in the venerable fellowship
Of twelve companions, and that miracle,
The mystery of the blessed Stigmata,
And in the unbroken fast of holy Lent,
The which he kept on this wise.

Being once
Nigh to Perugia's lake upon the day
Of Carnival in a disciple's house
Who loved him, and with whom he had lodged the
night,
Saint Francis was of God inspired to go
Unto an island of the aforesaid lake,
That Lent to keep : whereat Saint Francis prayed
This fond disciple for the love of Christ
To bear him over in his little boat
To a lake-island wherein no man dwelt,

And this to do upon Ash-Wednesday night,
That none might note him. He, for the deep love
He had toward Saint Francis, readily
Performed the thing he asked, and bare him o'er
To the said island. And Saint Francis took
But two small loaves with him. And when they
touched

The island, and his friend, at point to part,
Was turning home, Saint Francis by his love
Prayed him tell no man wherefore he was there,
Nor, save on Holy Thursday, come himself
To seek him: so the other from his side
Was parted, and Saint Francis left alone.

And since there was no dwelling whereunto
He might betake him, a thick wooded holt
He entered, the which many thorns and shrubs
Had shaped to semblance of a little hut
Or cave, and therein gat himself to prayer
And meditation upon heavenly things.

And there all Lent remained he, eating not
Nor drinking, save of one of those small loaves
The half, as witnessed his disciple, when
On Holy Thursday he returned to him,
And found, of the two loaves, yet whole the one
And halved the other: and the one half ate
Saint Francis out of reverence for the fast,
As folk believe, of Christ the Blessed One,
Who fasted forty days and forty nights,
Not tasting even of material food:
And so with that half-loaf he chased from him

The venom of vainglory, and by Christ's
Ensample forty days and forty nights
Fasted: and in the place, thereafter, where
Saint Francis had this wondrous abstinence
Enacted, many a miracle did God
Work through his merits; for the which thing's sake
Folk 'gan to build them houses, and there dwell;
And in brief space arose a hamlet large
And goodly, and there, too, the Brothers' House,
' House of the Island ' hight; and still the men
And women of that hamlet hold the place
In love and awe, where kept the aforesaid Lent
Saint Francis.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

VII

OF PATIENCE WHICH IS PERFECT
JOY

ONCE, as Saint Francis to Saint Mary's shrine,
Named of the Angels, from Perugia went
With Brother Leo in the time of Spring,
Pinched shrewdly by the exceeding bitter cold,
He cried to Brother Leo, who strode before
A little, and said to him: 'O Brother Leo,
Albeit the Brothers Minor in all lands
Give great ensamples of life-holiness
And godly edifying, do thou write
Nathless, and diligently give heed hereto,
That therein is not perfect joy.' Anon,
The second time, now further on his way,
'O Brother Leo,' Saint Francis cried, 'albeit
A Minor Brother to blind eyes give sight,
Straighten the crooked limb, cast devils out,
Make the deaf hear, and the lame man to walk,
Yea, to the dumb give speech, and—which is yet
A greater thing—raise up the four-days-dead,
Write thou that herein is not perfect joy.'
And, going a little way, he loudly cried:
'Albeit the Minor Brother knew all tongues,
O Brother Leo, and all sciences,
Yea, and all scriptures, so that he had skill
To prophesy, nor only bring to light

Things future, but the secrets of the heart
 And conscience, write : " Not here is perfect joy." "
 And yet again, a little further on,
 Saint Francis loudly called to him, and said :
 ' O Brother Leo, little sheep of God,
 Albeit the Minor Brother speak with tongue
 Of angels, and the courses of the stars,
 And hidden virtues of the herbs, should know,
 And all earth's treasures were revealed to him,
 And though he understood of birds and fish
 And of all beasts the virtues, and of men,
 And trees, and rocks, and roots, and water—write
 That not herein is perfect joy.' And yet
 A little further onward, with loud voice
 Saint Francis cried : ' O Brother Leo, albeit
 The Minor Brother wist so well to preach,
 That to Christ's faith all heathendom he win,
 Write thou that herein is not perfect joy.'
 And, for two miles the fashion of his speech
 Continuing thus, much marvelling, at length
 Spake Brother Leo and inquired of him :
 ' Father, I pray thee in the name of God
 Make known to me wherein is perfect joy.'
 And thus Saint Francis answered him : ' When we
 Shall to Saint Mary of the Angels come,
 Soaked thus with rain, and frozen with the cold,
 And mud-bespattered and with hunger spent,
 Knock at the House-door, and the porter comes
 In wrath, and asks : " Who are ye ? " and we say :
 " Two of your Brethren we," and he replies :

“ Nay, but ye say not sooth, two rogues ye are
Who go about cozening the world, to rob
The poor man of his alms ; away with you ! ”
Nor will not open to us, and makes us stand
Out in the rain and snow, hungry and cold,
Even until nightfall ; then, if all these wrongs,
And all this cruelty, and these rude rebuffs,
We shall in patience, without soreness, bear,
And murmur not against him, and shall think
With charity and meekness that indeed
The porter knows us, and was moved by God
To our abuse ; O Brother Leo, write
That herein there is perfect joy. And if
We still continue knocking, and he comes forth
Outrageous, and with insults and with blows
Drives us away, as knaves importunate,
Saying : “ Go, get ye hence, vile pilferers !
Off to the hospital, since here shall be
Nor bed, nor bite for ye ! ” if this we bear
With patience, cheerfulness, and love, herein,
O Brother Leo, write, is perfect joy.
And if, with cold and hunger and the night
Sore pressed, yet knock and call we, praying him
With loud plaints, for the love of God, to ope
And let us in, and he, the more enraged,
Shall say : “ Lo ! these be knaves importunate ;
Now will I pay them that they have deserved,”
And with a knotty staff shall issue forth,
And hale us by the hood, and fling to earth,
And roll us in the snow, and with that staff

Belabour, knot by knot—if all these things
We shall with patience joyfully endure,
Weighing the sufferings of the blessed Christ,
The which for His love's sake we ought to bear—
Here and herein, O Brother Leo, write
Is perfect joy. Now mark the end hereof :
Above all things, all graces, Brother Leo,
And gifts of the Holy Spirit, the which Christ
Vouchsafeth to His friends, is over self
To triumph, and for Christ's sake willingly
Bear pains, reproaches, injuries, and want ;
Seeing that in all the other gifts of God
Glory we may not, being not ours, but God's :
For which cause saith the Apostle : “ What hast thou
Which thou hadst not of God ? And, if of Him
Thou hadst it, wherefore glory, even as though
Thou hadst it of thyself ? ” But in the cross
Of tribulation and of suffering boast
We may, since that is ours : and for this cause
The Apostle saith : “ I have no will to boast,
Save in the Cross of Jesu Christ our Lord.” ’

To whom be endless honour and renown
For ever and for evermore. Amen.

VIII

HOW SAINT FRANCIS AND BROTHER
LEO SAID MATINS WITHOUT A
BREVIARY

It chanced, whenas the Order yet was young,
 Saint Francis lodged within a certain House
 With Brother Leo, where no book they had
 To say the Holy Office : and when now
 The hour of matins came, Saint Francis spake
 To Brother Leo : ' We lack breviary,
 Dear Son, wherewith the Matin-song to say :
 But, that our time in praising God be spent,
 Lo ! I will speak, and thou shalt make reply,
 As I shall teach thee ; and look well that thou
 Answer not otherwise, nor change the words
 I teach. " O Brother Francis," I shall say,
 " Such evils hast thou wrought, such heinous sins,
 While in the world, that thou deservest hell " :
 And, Brother Leo, thou shalt make reply :
 " True is it thou hast earned hell's lowest depth. " '
 Said Brother Leo, simple as a dove,
 ' Willingly, Father, in God's name begin.'
 Thereat Saint Francis 'gan to say : ' Such ills,
 O Brother Francis, in the world thou'st wrought,
 And sins so many, that thou deservest hell.'
 ' God ', replied Brother Leo, ' through thee will work
 Such weal, that thou shalt go to Paradise.'

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‘ Nay, Brother Leo, not thus,’ Saint Francis said,
‘ Art thou to answer: but when I shall say,
“ O Brother Francis, against God thou’st wrought
Iniquities so many, that thou deserv’st
To be accurs’d of God,” say, “ Verily
Among the accursèd thou deserv’st to be.” ’

And Brother Leo made answer, ‘ Willingly,
My Father.’ Then with many tears, and sighs,
And beatings of the breast, with loud voice spake
Saint Francis: ‘ O my Lord of heaven and earth,
Against Thee I have wrought so many wrongs,
And sins so many, I well deserve of Thee
To be accurs’d.’ And Brother Leo replied:
‘ So, Brother Francis, shall God deal with thee,
That thou among the blessed shalt be blest
Supremely.’ And Saint Francis, marvelling
That Brother Leo made answers opposite
To that he had enjoined, rebuked him, saying:
‘ Why, as I teach thee, answerest thou not?
By holy Obedience, I command that thou
Make answer, as I bid thee: I shall say:
“ O Brother Francis, miserable wight,
Thinkest thou God will mercy shew to thee,
Seeing so oft thou hast trespassed against Him,
Who is the Father of mercies, and therewith
God of all consolation, that thou art
Unworthy to find mercy ? ” Whereunto
Thou, Brother Leo, little lamb, shalt say:
“ Mercy to find no whit art worthy thou.” ’

But afterward, whenas Saint Francis said:

‘ O Brother Francis, miserable wight,’
 With the like words that followed, thus to him
 Made answer Brother Leo : ‘ My Father, God,
 Whose mercy than thy sin is vaster far,
 Will shew thee plenteous mercy, and thereto
 Add many graces.’ Upon which reply
 Sweetly indignant, patiently distressed,
 Saint Francis thus to Brother Leo spoke :
 ‘ Why ’gainst Obedience hast thou thus presumed,
 And now so oft made answers opposite
 Of that which I enjoined thee ? ’ ‘ Nay, God
 knows,
 Father,’ with reverence and humility
 Quoth Brother Leo, ‘ that each time I fixed
 Within my heart to answer as thou bad’st,
 But God hath made me speak as pleaseth Him,
 Not as me pleaseth.’ Whereat marvelling,
 To Brother Leo Saint Francis spake and said :
 ‘ Right lovingly I pray thee that this time
 Thou answer as I told thee.’ ‘ In God’s name
 Speak,’ replied Brother Leo, ‘ for verily
 Will I this time make answer as thou wilt.’
 Then spake with tears Saint Francis : ‘ Dost thou
 think,
 O Brother Francis, miserable wight,
 God will to thee shew mercy ? ’—and the rest.
 ‘ Yea,’ replied Brother Leo, ‘ plenteous grace
 Shalt thou receive of God, who will exalt
 And glorify thee even for evermore :
 For who himself doth humble, he shall be

SAID MATINS WITHOUT A BREVIARY 39

Exalted ; and none other can I say,
For by my mouth God speaketh.' On this wise
In lowly striving, amid many tears,
And with much ghostly solace, until dawn
They kept their vigil.

To the praise of Christ.

IX

HOW BROTHER MASSEO MADE
PROOF OF SAINT FRANCIS

WHEN in the House of Portiuncula
Saint Francis once with Brother Masseo lodged
Of Marignano—a right saintly man,
Discreet withal, and graced to speak of God,
For which thing's sake Saint Francis loved him much—
One day Saint Francis from the wood and prayer
Returning, and e'en now at the wood's mouth,
The said Brother Masseo would make proof
Of his humility, and to meet him went,
And, as in mockery, said: 'Why after thee ?
Why after thee ? Why after thee ?' Replied
Saint Francis: 'What is that which thou wouldest
say ?'

Quoth Brother Masseo: 'Why doth the whole world
Run after thee, I say, and all so crave
To see, hear, and obey thee ? Thou art not
Comely of form, thou art not greatly learn'd,
Noble thou art not: whence then cometh it
That the whole world runs after thee ?' This word
Saint Francis hearing waxed right glad of soul,
And, raising face to heaven, a great while stood
With mind in God uplifted, and anon,
Come to himself again, knelt down, and gave
Glory and thanks to God, and afterward

With utmost fervour of spirit turned once more
To Brother Masseo, and said to him : 'Wouldst know
Why after me ? Why after me wouldst know,
Wouldst know why after me the whole world runs ?
This have I from the eyes of most high God,
The which in every place behold both good
And guilty : wherefore those most holy eyes
Have among sinners beheld none more vile,
More helpless, or more sinful, than am I :
So that, to do that wondrous work the which
He purposeth to do, He hath not found
On earth a viler creature ; for which cause
Me hath He chosen to tread under foot
The nobleness, the greatness, and the strength,
The beauty, and the wisdom of the world :
So men may know that every grace and good
Cometh of Him, not of the creature, yea,
And that no flesh may glory in His sight,
But who would glory, glory in the Lord,
To whom is glory and honour without end.'
Then Brother Masseo, at this meek response,
Spoke with such fervour, was afeard, and wist
How that Saint Francis stood firm-based on true
Humility.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

X

HOW SAINT FRANCIS MADE BROTHER
MASSEO TO TURN ROUND

ONE day, Saint Francis walking by the way
With Brother Masseo, as it chanced, the said
Brother Masseo walked some steps before :
And coming to a cross-way, from the which
One might to Florence, or Siena wend,
Or to Arezzo, Brother Masseo said :
' Father, by which way must we go ? ' Replied
Saint Francis : ' By the way which God shall will.'
Said Brother Masseo : ' How are we to know
God's will ? ' Replied Saint Francis : ' By the sign
Which I shall show thee : wherefore I command,
As holy Obedience doth require of thee,
That in the cross-way where thy feet are set
Thou turn thee round and round, as children do,
Nor stay thy turning till I speak the word.'
Then Brother Masseo 'gan to turn him round,
And turned so often, that through dizziness
Of brain, the which such turning wont to breed,
He fell to earth full many a time : but since
No word of resting did Saint Francis speak,
And he would fain obey him faithfully,
Each time arose he, and 'gan turn again.
At last, while he was bravely turning still,
Saint Francis said : ' Stand fast, and move not ' : so

He stood : whereat Saint Francis asked of him :
' Toward what quarter is thy face now set ? '
And Brother Masseo said : ' Siena-ward.'
Saint Francis answered : ' That then is the way
Which God would have us go.' And as they went
Along that way, sore marvelled to himself
Brother Masseo, that Saint Francis thus
Had made him act as though he were a child,
Before the lay-folk who were passing by :
Nathless for reverence durst he say no word
Unto the holy Father. As they drew
Nigh to Siena, lo ! the city-folk
Of the Saint's coming heard, and gat them out
To meet him, and devoutly bare him on,
With his companion, to the bishop's house,
So that the ground ne'er touched they with their feet.
At that time certain of the folk had strife
Together, and already twain were dead.
And, thither come, Saint Francis preached to them
Words so devout and holy, that they all
To peace and perfect amity were brought,
And concord each with other. For which cause
The Bishop of Siena, when he heard
What holy deed Saint Francis had performed,
Bade to his house, and entertained him there
With utmost honour, both that day and night.
And the next morn Saint Francis, who in sooth
Being right humble sought in all he did
Naught but God's glory, gat him up betimes
With his companion, and departed thence,

Nor knew the bishop aught thereof. Whereat
Brother Masseo went along the way
With inward murmurs, saying : ' What is this
That this good man hath done ? Me like a child
He made spin round, and to the bishop, who
Such honour paid him, gave he no good word,
Nor did with thanks requite him ' : and herein
To Brother Masseo did Saint Francis seem
To have borne him indiscreetly. But anon
By heavenly inspiration to himself
Once more returning, of himself rebuked,
With his own heart he spake : ' Thou art too proud,
Brother Masseo, in that thou dost judge
Of things divine ; and worthy of hell thou art
For this thy witless pride ; since yesterday
Such holy deeds were by Saint Francis wrought
That, had God's angel wrought them, they had been
No whit more wondrous : wherefore to throw stones
If he had bidden thee, thou shouldst have obeyed :
For that which on this road was done by him
Came of God's ordinance, as plain appears
By the good end which afterward ensued :
Since if he had not reconciled the folk
Who were at strife together, not alone
Had many bodies been with daggers slain,
Which was afoot already, but many souls
Likewise the devil had dragged down to hell ;
Wherefore thou art a most fond man and proud,
At that to murmur which, full plain to see,
Springs from the will of God.' And all these things,

Which Brother Masseo spake with his own heart
Going before him, were of God revealed
Unto Saint Francis: wherefore, drawing near,
Saint Francis said to him: ' Hold fast the thoughts
Which now thou thinkest, seeing that they are good,
And serviceable, and of God inspired :
But thy first murmuring was blind, proud, and vian,
And by the devil implanted in thy heart.'
Then Brother Masseo saw that of a truth
Saint Francis knew the secrets of his soul,
And wist full surely that in all his acts
The Spirit of heavenly wisdom did direct
The holy Father.

To the praise of Christ.

XI

HOW SAINT FRANCIS WISHED
TO ABASE BROTHER MASSEO

SAINT FRANCIS being minded to abase
Brother Masseo, that through many gifts
And graces, which God gave him, he might not
Uplift him to vainglory, but grow up
By virtue of humility, therewith,
From virtue unto virtue, once, when he
Was lodging in a lonely place with those
True Saints, his first disciples, among whom
Was the said Brother Masseo, on a day,
All the companions present, spake and said
To Brother Masseo : ' Thy companions here,
O Brother Masseo, one and all have grace
For contemplation and for prayer, but thou
The grace, by preaching of God's word, to give
Their fill unto the people : for which cause,
That these on contemplation may be bent,
I will thou do the office of the door,
Of alms, and of the kitchen ; and, withal,
When eat the other Brethren, thou shalt eat
Outside the House-door, that to those who come,
Or ere they knock thou mayst vouchsafe their fill
Of the good words of God ; so need there none
Go forth, but thou, to greet them ; and this do
As holy Obedience doth require.' Thereat

Brother Masseo drew aback his hood,
And bowed his head, and humbly did receive
And keep the holy mandate, many days
Doing the office of the door, of alms,
And of the kitchen. His companions then,
As men by God illumined, 'gan to feel
Sore prickings at the heart, bethinking them
That Brother Masseo was indeed a man
Of high perfection, as themselves, or more,
Yet all on him, no whit on them, was laid
The burden of the House. For which thing's sake
Moved all by one desire they gat them forth,
And prayed the holy Father to mete out
Those offices amongst them, seeing indeed
Their consciences could brook not that such toils
Be borne by Brother Masseo. Hearing this,
Saint Francis to their counsels yielded him,
Bowed to their will, and, having called him, said
To Brother Masseo: 'Thy companions here,
O Brother Masseo, of the offices
I gave thee would partake: I therefore will
That the said offices divided be.'

Said Brother Masseo with deep humbleness
And patience: 'Father, that thou layest on me,
Or whole, or part, I deem it done by God.'

Thereat Saint Francis, when he saw their love,
And Brother Masseo's humbleness of heart,
Anon discoursed to them in wondrous wise
On blest humility, exhorting them
How that the greater are the gifts of grace

48 ST. FRANCIS AND BROTHER MASSEO

Vouchsafed to us of God, the more should we
Be humble, since without humility
No virtue is with God acceptable.
And, done the preaching, with the tenderest love
Forthwith those offices he meted out
Among them.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XII

HOW SAINT FRANCIS PRAYED FOR
THE GRACE OF POVERTY AND
RECEIVED THE SAME

THE wondrous thrall and follower of Christ,
To wit, Saint Francis, that in everything
He might to Christ conform him perfectly—
Who, as the gospel saith, by two and two
Sent His disciples forth to every town
And place Himself would visit—having now
By Christ's ensample brought companions twelve
Together, sent them forth by two and two,
To preach throughout the world. And, that he
might

Of true obedience an ensample set,
He was himself the foremost to go forth,
According to Christ's pattern, who began,
Or ere He taught, to do. For the which cause,
Having assigned the other parts o' the earth
To his companions, and accompanied
Himself by Brother Masseo, he took road
Toward the land of France. And, on a day,
Coming nigh famished to a certain town,
They went begging their bread, for love of God,
As the Rule bade them: and Saint Francis took
One street, and Brother Masseo one. But since
Saint Francis was a meanly favoured man,

And small of stature, and, for this thing's sake,
Deemed a vile beggar of him who knew him not,
He for his asking gat but paltry bits,
And scanty morsels of dry bread : whereas
Brother Masseo, seeing that he was tall
And of fine presence, unto him were given
Enow of goodly portions and of great,
And from the unbroken loaf. Now when they had
made

An end of begging, afterward they met
To eat together in a certain place
Forth from the town, where was a fountain fair,
That had a stone beside it fair and great,
Where all the alms they set that each had ta'en
In begging. And Saint Francis, when he saw
That Brother Masseo's portions of the bread
Were more, more fine, and larger than his own,
Brake forth in utmost gladness, and exclaimed :
' O Brother Masseo, worthy are we not
Of such great treasure ' : and to him these words
Full many a time repeating answer made
Brother Masseo : ' How of treasure speak,
My Father, where is such deep poverty
And lack of all things needful ? Here we have
Nor cloth, nor knife, nor plate, nor porringer,
Nor house, nor board, nor serving-man, nor maid.'
Thereto replied Saint Francis : ' This is that
I deem great treasure, where is no house prepared
By human art, but whatsoe'er is here
Hath been prepared by Providence divine,

As plain appeareth in this bread we begged,
And fair stone table and pellucid spring.
Wherefore I will we pray to God that this
So noble treasure of holy poverty,
The which hath God for servitor, He may
Make us with all our heart to love.' And when
These words were spoken, and their repast was
done,

After prayer made, they rose to wend their way
France-ward ; and, coming to a certain church,
Saint Francis unto his companion said :
' Let us withdraw into this church to pray.'
And thereupon Saint Francis passed behind
The altar, and betook himself to prayer ;
And such surpassing ardour he received
From divine visitation, as he prayed,
The which in very truth so fired his soul
To love of holy poverty, that now
From colour of face, and strangely parted lips,
He seemed to be forth-shooting flames of love.
And, coming to him thus with fervour fired,
He said to his companion : ' Ah ! ah ! ah !
Brother Masseo, give thyself to me !'
And this he said three times ; and the third time
Saint Francis with his breath upraised in air
Brother Masseo, and in front of him
Launched, a great spear-length ; and amazement
vast
Seized Brother Masseo. And, as afterward
To his companions he recounted it,

While by the breath Saint Francis breathed on him
Raised and impelled, such sweetness of the soul
He felt, and comfort of the Holy Ghost,
As all his life-time felt he ne'er the like.

This done, Saint Francis said: 'Comrade most
dear,

Now hie we to Saint Peter and Saint Paul,
And pray them teach and aid us to possess
The sumless treasure, poverty divine—
Treasure which so august and godlike is,
That in these filthy vessels we are all
Unworthy to possess it, seeing that this
Is that celestial virtue, whereby things
Earthly and transient are trod underfoot,
And every trouble lifted from the soul,
That all unfettered with Eternal God
She may unite her. This that virtue is
Which makes the spirit housed on earth to hold
High converse with the Angels: this is that
Which with Christ sojourned on the Cross, with
Christ

Was buried, rose again with Christ, with Christ
Mounted to heaven; which even in this life
Unto the souls that love her doth vouchsafe
Ease to soar heavenward, since she guardeth still
The arms of true humility and love.

Now therefore intercession let us crave
Of Christ's most holy Apostles, who themselves
Were perfect lovers of this gospel-pearl,
Grace to obtain of our Lord Jesu Christ,

That He would make us of His sacred ruth
Worthy to be true lovers, worshippers,
And lowly learners of the thrice beloved
And ever precious gospel poverty.'

Amid such communing to Rome they came,
And passed within Saint Peter's, and thereof
Saint Francis in one corner, and in one
Brother Masseo gat himself to prayer :

And as they bode long time with many tears
Praying devoutly, to Saint Francis' sight
In glorious sheen the blest Apostles twain,
Peter and Paul, appeared, who said to him :

' Since thou dost ask and crave to follow that
Which followed was of Christ and of the blest
Apostles, therefore Jesu Christ the Lord
Bids us declare to thee thy prayer is heard,
And that to thee and to thy followers
In full perfection is vouchsafed of God
The treasure of most holy poverty.

And, further, we bring word to thee from Him
That whosoe'er shall follow this desire
By thine ensample perfectly, hath pledge
Of bliss in life eternal : and thyself
And all thy followers shall be blest of God.'

So, having said, they vanished from his sight,
Leaving Saint Francis with heart-solace filled.

Anon, from prayer uprising, he returned
To his companion, and inquired if God
Had naught to him revealed : he answered no.
Then told Saint Francis how that to himself

54 HOW ST. FRANCIS PRAYED FOR POVERTY

The holy Apostles had appeared, and what
Revealed to him : whereat right joyfully
Back to Spoleto's valley they resolved
Each to return, their journey into France
Foregoing.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XIII

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO SAINT
FRANCIS AND HIS COMPANIONS

SAINT FRANCIS, when the Order first began,
Being with his companions on a time
Met in a certain place, to talk of Christ,
He, by the ardour of his spirit moved,
Bade one of them in God's name ope his mouth,
And utter forth of God what words soe'er
The Holy Ghost inspired. The Brother then
His hest fulfilling, and in wondrous sort
Speaking of God, Saint Francis laid on him
Silence, and bade another do the like:
And he obeying, as in subtlest wise
Of God he spake, Saint Francis upon him
Laid the like silence, and so bade a third
Discourse of God ; and in like manner he
So deeply of God's hidden mysteries
'Gan to give utterance, that Saint Francis knew
He also by the Holy Spirit spake,
Even as the other twain : which was withal
By special sign made manifest, for as
They parleyed thus together, in their midst
Appeared the blessed Christ, who, in the form
Of a fair youth, vouchsafed His benison,
And with such sweetness filled them, that they all
Were ravished from themselves, and lay as dead,

56 HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. FRANCIS

Not heeding aught of this world. Afterward,
When to themselves they came, Saint Francis said :
‘ Brethren belovèd, give ye thanks to God,
Who by the mouth of simple folk hath deigned
The wealth of heavenly wisdom to reveal :
Since God it is that openeth the mouths
Of dumb men, and the tongues of simple folk
Maketh to utter words surpassing wise.’

XIV

HOW SAINT CLARE ATE WITH SAINT
FRANCIS IN SAINT MARY OF THE
ANGELS

SAINT FRANCIS, at Assisi sojourning,
Would visit oft Saint Clare, and unto her
Give holy admonitions. Now she had
A strong desire for once to eat with him,
And to that end besought him many a time,
But ne'er that solace would he grant to her.
For which cause his companions, when they saw
Saint Clare's desire, unto Saint Francis said :
' Father, we deem this sternness sorteth not
With heavenly charity, that to Sister Clare,
A maid so saintly and by God beloved,
Thou should'st not hearken in a thing so slight
As to eat bread with thee, and that the more,
Seeing that through thy preaching she renounced
The riches and the splendour of the world.
Yea, in good sooth a greater grace than this,
An she had asked thee, wert thou bound to do
Unto thy spiritual plant.' Thereat
Replied Saint Francis : ' Think ye that I ought
To grant it ? ' His companions answered him :
' Yea, Father, meet and right it is that thou
Do her this solace.' Then Saint Francis said :
' Since so to you, so seems it then to me ;

And, more to comfort her, I will this feast
Be in Saint Mary of the Angels held ;
Since at Saint Damian's for so long a time
She hath been cloistered, that 'twill gladden her
To look a little on Saint Mary's House,
Where she was shorn, and unto Jesu Christ
Espoused : there let us eat then in God's name
Together.' And when the appointed day was come,
Saint Clare from out her Convent issuing,
With one companion, and accompanied
By the Companions of Saint Francis came
Thus to Saint Mary of the Angels, where,
Her salutation to Maid Mary given
Before the shrine where she was shorn and veiled,
To view the House they led her, till such hour
As they should dine. Saint Francis therewithal
On the bare ground, the while, let spread the board,
As was his wont : and when the hour was come,
They set them down, Saint Francis and Saint Clare
Together, and, with Saint Clare's companion, one
Of the Companions of Saint Francis : then
Who yet remained did range them at the board
Right humbly. And behold ! at the first dish,
Saint Francis 'gan so sweetly speak of God
In words so wondrous, that, the overflow
Of grace divine descending from on high
Upon them, one and all were rapt in God :
And while they were thus rapt, with eyes and hands
Upraised to heaven, those of Assisi's town,
Bettona, and the country round about,

Beheld Saint Mary of the Angels—all
The House, and the wood near it—burning bright ;
And there appeared as 'twere a mighty fire,
That did the Church, the House, the forest, fill ;
Whereat the Assisans gat them at great speed
Thither to quench it, thinking the whole place
Was fiercely blazing. But, arrived the House,
And finding there no fire, they entered in,
And saw Saint Francis, and Saint Clare, and all
Their company, so sitting, rapt in God,
In contemplation round that humble board.
Whence understood they of a truth that that
Had not been earthly, but celestial, fire,
Miraculously sent by God to shew
And symbolise the fire of love divine,
Whereby those holy Brothers, holy Nuns,
Were soul-ekindled ; and they went their way
Much comforted. A long time afterward,
Saint Francis, and Saint Clare, and all the rest,
Returning to themselves, and feeling sweet
Refreshment from that spiritual food,
Gave but scant heed unto the body's fare.
And so Saint Clare, this blest refection done,
Back to Saint Damian with good escort hied ;
And, seeing her, the Sisters were right glad,
For they had feared Saint Francis sending her
To rule some other Convent, as ere now
Her holy Sister Agnes had been sent
To rule in Florence o'er the Sisterhood
Of Monticelli ; and Saint Francis once

60 HOW ST. CLARE ATE WITH ST. FRANCIS

Had said to her: 'Be ready, if need were
I sent thee to some other House': and she,
Of holy Obedience a daughter true,
Made answer: 'Father, send me where thou wilt,
Ready am I to go.' And therefore now
Much joyed the Sisters to receive her back;
And therewithal Saint Clare from that time forth
Remained much solaced.

To the praise of Christ.

XV

HOW SAINT FRANCIS PREACHED TO
THE BIRDS

THE holy Francis, humble thrall of God,
Soon after his conversion having now
Assembled, and within the Order brought
Many companions, fell to pondering deep,
In mighty doubt of that he ought to do—
Or wholly give himself to prayer, or else
Sometimes to preaching: and hereof he craved
Right earnestly to know God's will. And since
The holy humbleness, that in him was,
Suffered him not upon himself presume,
Or his own prayers, he thought the Will Divine
To seek through prayers of others: so he called
Brother Masseo, and bespoke him thus:
' Hie thee to Sister Clare, and from my mouth
Bid her, with one of her companions
Most spiritual, devoutly to pray God
That it might please Him manifest to me
Whether of these were better—or to give
Myself to preaching, or to prayer alone:
Then go to Brother Silvester, and bespeak
Him in like manner.' He had lived i' the world,
And was that Brother Silvester who had seen
A gold cross issue from Saint Francis' mouth,

Whose height reached heaven, whose breadth to the earth's end.

And the said Brother Silvester was of such Deep sanctity of life, that whatsoe'er He asked of God was heard and granted him, And oft he talked with God ; for which things' sake Saint Francis held him in heart-worship. So Brother Masseo, as Saint Francis bade, Departed, and performed his embassage First to Saint Clare, and, after, in due course To Brother Silvester, who, receiving it, Forthwith to prayer addressed him, and obtained, Praying, an answer from on high, and turned To Brother Masseo, and on this wise spake : ' Thus saith the Lord : " To Brother Francis say, God hath not called him for himself alone To this estate, but that he may bear fruit Of souls, and many may through him be saved." ' So, to his questing having this response, Brother Masseo to Saint Clare returned, To know what answer she had gained of God : And she replied she had of God received, With her companion, the selfsame response As Brother Silvester. With this message then Brother Masseo to Saint Francis went : And him Saint Francis with most fervent love Greeted, and washed his feet, and made the meal Ready, and, when he had eaten, bade him come Into the wood, and knelt before him there, And drew his hood back, making of his arms

A cross, and thus inquired of him : ‘ What is it
That my Lord Jesu Christ doth bid me do ? ’
And Brother Masseo answered : ‘ Even so
To Brother Silvester, as to Sister Clare
And to her sister, hath Christ made reply,
Revealing it to be His will that thou
Shouldst through the world go preaching, seeing that
He

Hath chosen thee not for thyself alone,
But for the sake of other souls beside.’

This answer then Saint Francis having heard,
And knowing therefrom the will of Jesu Christ,
Uprose, and with exceeding fervour said :

‘ In God’s name go we ! ’ and therewith he took
Brother Masseo and Brother Agnolo,
Both holy men, to bear him company,
And as, by ardour of the spirit driven,
He went, naught recking of the road or path,
He came unto a certain village called
Carmano, and Saint Francis thereupon
Addressed himself to preach ; but first he bade
The swallows, that were twittering, to be still
Till he should end his preaching ; and the birds
Obeyed him ; and so fervently he preached,
That all the men and women there were fain
To quit the village and go after him.

But this Saint Francis suffered not, and said :
‘ Be not o’er-hasty, nor from thence depart ;
And I will order that ye ought to do
For your souls’ saving.’ And he thereupon

Bethought him the third Order to create,
Whereby the whole world might salvation win.
So solace-filled he left them, and full well
To penitence disposed, and, parting thence,
Betwixt Carmano and Bevagna came.
And, ardently as ever journeying on,
He raised his eyes and certain trees beheld
Fast by the wayside, on whose boughs were perched
A multitude of birds innumerable,
So that Saint Francis was amazed thereat,
And said to his companions : ' In the road
Ye shall await me here, while I go preach
Unto the birds my sisters ' : and he went
Within the field, and to the birds 'gan preach
That on the ground were sitting ; and at once
Those that were on the trees did come to him,
And, one and all, stayed motionless until
Saint Francis had done preaching, and e'en then
Departed not till he had given them
His benediction. And, as afterward
Brother Masseo unto Brother James
Of Massa told it, though Saint Francis now
Walked in their midst, and touched them with his
cloak,
No bird did budge for him. And this in brief
Was what Saint Francis preached to them : ' O birds
My sisters, much to your Creator God
Are ye behoden, and in every place
Should alway praise Him, who hath given to you
Twofold and threefold raiment, and beside

Hath made you free to fly abroad at will,
And further did preserve in Noah's ark
A seed of you, that so your race i' the world
Might minish not: nor less are ye to God
Beholden for the element of air
By Him bequeathed you: and, beside all this,
Ye sow not, neither do ye reap, and God
Doth feed you, giving you the springs and streams
To drink of, and for refuge hills and vales,
And the high trees to make your nests therein:
And seeing ye know not how to spin or sew,
God clotheth you, and eke your little ones:
Right well doth your Creator love you, then,
Who all these benefits vouchsafeth you.
Wherfore, my little sisters, look to it
Ye sin not through ingratitude, but strive
Ever your utmost to give praise to God.'
And, as Saint Francis spake these words to them,
Lo ! all those birds began to ope their beaks,
Stretch out their necks, and spread abroad their wings,
Bow reverently their heads to earth, and shew
By songs and gestures what great joy the words
Of the holy Father gave them: and with them
Rejoiced Saint Francis likewise, and was glad;
And much amazed him all that multitude
And wondrous fair diversity of birds,
And how they hearkened, and their friendly ways;
For the which cause devoutly did he laud
Their Maker in them. Last, the preaching done,
Saint Francis o'er them made the sign o' the Cross,

66 SAINT FRANCIS AND THE BIRDS

And gave them leave to go : then all those birds
Did in one flock uplift them into air
With marvellous songs, and like unto the cross
Saint Francis had made over them, e'en so
Divided four-wise, whereof one part flew
Eastward, one west, a third toward the south,
And the fourth northward ; and each several flock
Upon its way sang wondrous songs, thereby
To symbolise that, as Saint Francis now,
The standard-bearer of the Cross of Christ,
Had preached to them, and over them had made
The sign o' the Cross—according to which sign
They to the world's four quarters did divide—
So should the preaching of the Cross of Christ,
Requickened by Saint Francis, be by him
And by the Brethren borne through all the world ;
Which Brethren, like the birds, possessing naught
In this world, to God's Providence alone
.Commend their being.

To Christ's praise. Amen.

XVI

HOW A LITTLE LAD SAW SAINT
FRANCIS TALKING WITH CHRIST

A LITTLE lad right pure and innocent,
Was, while Saint Francis lived, received within
The Order, and abode in a small House,
Wherein the Brothers of necessity
Slept twain a bed: and on a time it chanced
Saint Francis came to the said House at eve,
And after Compline gat him to repose,
That, while the other Brethren slept, he might
Arise, as was his wont, by night to pray.
Now the said little lad had set his heart
To watch Saint Francis' ways full diligently,
His saintliness to learn, and above all
Know how he bore him when by night he rose.
And, to the end that sleep might cheat him not,
The aforesaid little lad lay down to rest
Next to Saint Francis, and his own cord tied
Unto Saint Francis' cord, that he might feel
When he arose: and naught hereof perceived
Saint Francis. But at night in his first sleep,
When all the Brothers slept, Saint Francis rose
From sleep, and, finding his cord fastened thus,
Loosed it so softly that the little lad
Felt nothing, and alone Saint Francis went

Into the wood which bordered on the House,
And entered a small cell that was therein,
And fell to prayer. After a little time
The lad awoke, and, finding the cord loosed,
And up and gone Saint Francis, rose himself
And went in search of him : and seeing the door
Open, which led into the wood, he deemed
Saint Francis had gone thither, and himself
Entered the wood. And, coming nigh the place
Where prayed Saint Francis, he began to hear
Much talking, and drew closer for to learn
What the sound meant, and saw a marvellous
light

Which did surround Saint Francis, and therein
Christ, and the Virgin Mary, and with them
Saint John, both Baptist and Evangelist,
And a great multitude of Angels, who
Were talking with Saint Francis. And this lad,
Seeing and hearing, fell to earth in a swoon :
And when the mystic, holy vision closed,
Saint Francis, homeward wending, with his feet
Happed on the little lad, who lay as dead
Upon the path, and, pitying, in his arms
Uplifted him, and bare him to his bed,
As the good shepherd doth his little sheep.
And learning from him after how he had seen
That Vision, he forbade him tell the thing
Ever to any, while himself should live.
And growing in God's grace abundantly,
And deep love for Saint Francis, afterward

The little lad became a valiant man
In the Order, nor until Saint Francis died
Aught of that Vision to the Brotherhood
Revealed he.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XVII

HOW SAINT FRANCIS HELD A
CHAPTER AT ASSISI

THE holy Francis, faithful thrall of Christ,
Once at Saint Mary of the Angels held
A Chapter General, at which Chapter met
More than five thousand Brothers. Thither came
Saint Dominic, Head and Founder of the Rule
Of preaching Friars, from Borgogna, then
Bound Rome-ward. So when to his ears was borne
This gathering of the Chapter, at that time
Held by Saint Francis in Saint Mary's plain,
Named of the Angels, to the sight he hied,
With seven of his Order. Furthermore
At the said Chapter was a Cardinal,
Devoted to Saint Francis, who erewhile
Had prophesied to him he should be Pope :
And so it came to pass. This Cardinal
Had of set purpose from Perugia's town,
Where the Court sojourned, to Assisi come :
And day by day he gat him down to see
Saint Francis and his Brothers, and at times
Would chant the Mass, at times discourse to them
In Chapter : and deep solace and delight
Had the said Cardinal, whene'er he came
To view that holy fellowship. And as
Upon the plain around Saint Mary's shrine

He saw the Brothers set in companies—
Here forty, here a hundred, and here twice
Or thrice that tale together, wholly bent
Upon discourse of God, on prayer, on tears,
On tasks of charity, and continuing
Rapt in such silence, with such modesty,
That not a sound was heard there—marvelling
At all that host so marshalled, he exclaimed
With tears and deep devotion: ‘This is sure
The camp and army of the Knights of God.’
And none was heard in all that multitude
Prating or jesting, but where met soe'er
A company of Brothers, or they prayed,
Or said the Office, or bewailed their sins,
Or sins of benefactors, or discoursed
Of God, or of the saving of the soul.
Now in that camp were roofs of willow-withes,
And mats of rushes, ranged in groups, as were
The Brothers of the divers Provinces:
Wherefore that Chapter also gat to name
The Chapter of rush-mats or willow-withes.
On the bare earth their beds were, and some had
A little straw thereto: of stones or wood
Their pillows: for the which things' sake so deep
Was the devotion toward them of who heard
Or saw, and such their fame for sanctity,
That from the Pope's Court, at Perugia then,
And other districts of Spoleto's vale,
Many to see them came, Counts, Barons, Knights,
And others gently born, much country-folk,

And Cardinals and Bishops therewithal,
Abbots and other Churchmen—to behold
This gathering so holy, great, and meek,
That the like multitude of saintly men
The world ne'er saw together: and in chief
Came they the holy Father and the Head
Of that most sacred Order to behold,
Who such fair booty from the world had won,
And so devout and fair a fellowship
Assembled, in the steps of Jesu Christ
To follow—the true Shepherd. So when now
The Chapter General was fully met,
Saint Francis, holy Father of them all,
And Minister in chief, with soul afire
Set forth the Word of God, and preached to them
In a loud voice that which the Holy Ghost
Moved him to utter: and these words he took
For theme of his discourse: ‘ My little sons,
Great things we have promised, but things greater far
Are promised us of God, if we but keep
That we have promised, and expect in faith
His promises to-us-ward. The world’s joy
Is brief, but endless the ensuing pain:
Little the pain of this life, infinite
The glory of the other.’ Upon these words
He, most devoutly preaching, comforted
The Brethren all, and to Obedience
Led them, and reverence for Holy Church,
Their Mother, and to fraternal love, and prayer
For all men, and in worldly teen to have

Patience, and temperance in prosperity ;
Ever to live as Angels pure and chaste ;
With God and men and their own hearts to be
At peace and concord, and to love withal
And cherish holiest Poverty. And here
' I charge you all,' quoth he, ' as is required
By holy Obedience, that no one of you,
Met thus together, be careful or take thought
Whereof to eat or drink, nor yet provide
Things needful for the body, but give yourselves
To prayer and praise of God alone, and leave
Care for your bodies unto Him, since He
Hath special care for you.' And with glad heart
And joyful countenance received they all
This charge, and, when Saint Francis made an end
Of preaching, cast them to the earth in prayer.
Thereat Saint Dominic, who at all these things
Was present, marvelled mightily at the charge
Saint Francis gave, and deemed it indiscreet,
Nor could conceive how all that multitude
Might else support them, save by thought and care
For what the body needed. But the chief
Shepherd, the blessed Christ, willing to shew
What heed for His own sheep, and for His poor
What tender love He had, inspired the folk
Who at Perugia and Spoleto dwelt,
Foligno and Assisi, and all lands
Pertaining, straightway to bring food and drink
Unto that holy Company. And lo !
On a sudden thence came men with sumpter-mules,

Horses and wagons charged with bread and wine,
Honeycombs, cheese, and more good cheer to boot,
According as the poor of Christ had need.
Beside this, napkins, pitchers, cups, they brought,
And other vessels, that might serve the turn
Of such a multitude: and happy man
He deemed him, who might bring the most, or do
The readiest service; in such wise that even
Barons and knights and other gentlefolk,
Who came to gaze, did wait upon them now
With deep devotion and humility.
Wherefore Saint Dominic, when these things he saw,
Knowing of a truth that Providence divine
Was working in them, humbly did confess
He had misjudged Saint Francis indiscreet
Touching the charge, and knelt before him there,
And meekly told his fault, and added thus:
'God of a truth hath special care for these
His holy poor ones, and I knew it not:
And from henceforth I pledge me to observe
The gospel poverty, and in God's name
Denounce all Brothers of my Order who
In the said Order shall presume to hold
Aught in possession.' So Saint Dominic
Was mightily upbuilded by the faith
Of the most holy Francis, and no less
By the Obedience and the poverty
Of that so great, well-ordered fellowship,
And by the Providence of God, and rich
Abundance of all goodly things.

Came word

In the same Chapter to Saint Francis how
That divers Brothers wore upon their flesh
Corslets and hoops of iron, for the which cause
Many were weak, some dying, and not a few
Let from their prayers. Saint Francis thereupon,
Like a wise Father, forthwith gave command
By holy Obedience, that whoso had
Corslet or hoop of iron should doff the same,
And lay them at his feet: and so they did:
Of corslets then were told five hundred full,
Of iron hoops yet more, some for the arms,
Some for the loins, so that a mighty heap
They made: and there Saint Francis one and all
Bade leave them.

After this, the Chapter done,
Saint Francis, comforting them all in good,
And eke admonishing how they must escape
Untainted of this evil world, with God's
And his own blessing to their Provinces,
Each one with spiritual joy consoled,
Dismissed them.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XVIII

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO SAINT
FRANCIS, WHEN SUFFERING
FROM A MALADY OF THE EYES

SAINT FRANCIS with sore malady of the eyes
Being one time distempered, it befell
That Cardinal Ugolino, who was then
Protector of the Order, in the fond
Love which he bare him, wrote that he should come
And visit him at Rieti, where were then
For eyes the best physicians. Thereupon,
This letter of the Cardinal received,
Saint Francis to Saint Damian's first repaired,
Where was Saint Clare, devoted Spouse of Christ,
Some solace to vouchsafe her, and from thence
Go to the Cardinal. But, being there,
On the next night Saint Francis' eyes waxed worse,
So that no glimmer of light could he discern :
And, since he might not journey forth, Saint Clare
Made him a little cell of reeds, wherein
The better to repose : but what with pain
From his infirmity, and the swarming rats
Which did molest him sore, no jot of ease,
Either by night or day, Saint Francis had.
And seeing that of this pain and misery
Yet more he needs must suffer, he 'gan think
And recognize therein a scourge of God

For his offences, and with all his heart,
And his mouth's utterance, fell to thanking God,
In a loud voice exclaiming : ' O my Lord,
All this deserve I, and much worse than this.
Lord Jesu Christ, good Shepherd, who to us,
Sinners and worthless, dost in divers pains
And bodily anguish Thy compassion shew,
Grant unto me, a little sheep of Thine,
Virtue and grace, that for no outward ill,
Anguish, or sorrow, I may part from Thee.'
And, this prayer made, there came a voice from
heaven :

' Answer me, Francis : were the whole earth gold,
And all the seas, and springs, and rivers balm,
And stones of price the mountains, hills, and rocks,
And thou shouldst find a treasure nobler yet
Than these things are—as much as gold than earth,
And balm than water is, and precious stones
Than rocks and mountains, nobler—shouldst thou not
Be well content and happy ? ' Answer made
Saint Francis : ' All unworthy, Lord, am I
Of such a priceless treasure.' And the voice
Of God bespake him, saying : ' Have thou good cheer,
Francis, for this the treasure is of life
Eternal, which I hold in store for thee,
Against the hour when I possess thee of it ;
And all this trouble and pain an earnest is
Of that blest treasure.' Then Saint Francis called
To his companion, and, with fervent joy
Filled for so glorious a promise, said :

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‘ Go we unto the Cardinal ! ’ And, Saint Clare
With holy words first comforting, he took
Humbly his leave of her, and so set forth
Toward Rieti. And, when now drawn nigh
The city, so vast a multitude of folk
Came out to meet him, that for this thing’s sake
He would not enter in, but to a church
Betook him, which was nigh the town, perchance
A two miles’ journey. Then the city-folk,
Learning that he was in the church, flocked forth
To see him, so that the vineyard of the church
Was marred, and all the grapes plucked off, whereat
The priest, sore grieved at heart, repented him
To have received Saint Francis in his church.
Then, to Saint Francis being revealed of God
What the priest thought, he called for him and said :
‘ How many measures, dearest Father, say,
Yields thee this vineyard yearly at its best ? ’
Quoth he : ‘ Twelve measures.’ And Saint Francis
said :
‘ I pray thee, Father, to bear patiently
My sojourning some days, since good repose
I find here : and let any pluck the grapes
Of this thy vineyard, for the love of God
And me, His little poor one : and behold !
I promise in the name of Jesu Christ
My Lord that twenty measures it this year
Shall yield thee.’ And this thing Saint Francis
wrought
Of his there tarrying for the mighty fruit

Of souls that were seen gathered from the folk
Who came there ; of whom many went their way
Drunken with love divine, and left the world.
This promise of Saint Francis, then, the priest
Trusted, and did the vineyard freely leave
For those who came to him. O wonderful !
The vineyard was all wasted and plucked bare,
So that scarce any clusters there remained ;
The time of vintage came ; the priest plucked off
The aforesaid clusters, thrust them in the vat,
Trod them, and, as Saint Francis promised him,
Gat twenty measures thence of the best wine.
By the which miracle is plainly given
To know that, as the vineyard, spoiled of grapes,
In wine abounded, so the people of Christ,
Barren of virtue by their sin, should oft
Through merit of Saint Francis, and the love
He taught them, in good fruit abound of true
Repentance.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XIX

CONCERNING A NOVICE WHO HATED
THE HABIT OF SAINT FRANCIS

A YOUTH right noble and delicately reared
Into the Order of Saint Francis came,
Who, after some days, by the Devil impelled,
'Gan so to loathe the habit which he wore,
That seemed to him he wore a sack most vile :
The sleeves abhorred he, and the hood he loathed ;
And for their length and roughness these things seemed
A load intolerable : and, more and more
His hatred growing for the holy life,
At last he purposed to forgo the garb,
And to the world return. It was his wont
Already, as by his Master taught, each time
He passed the Convent-altar, where was kept
The Body of Christ, to fall upon his knees
With utmost reverence, and draw back his hood,
And bow, with arms held cross-wise. Now it chanced
That on the night when he should issue forth,
The altar of the Convent he must pass ;
And, passing it, according to his wont
He knelt and did a reverence : and behold !
On a sudden he was rapt in soul, and saw
A marvellous vision, shewn to him of God ;
For he beheld before his eyes go by
As 'twere an endless multitude of Saints,

In form like a procession, two and two,
Clad all in glorious raiment, robes of price,
Faces and hands resplendent like the sun ;
And with angelic chants and songs they went :
Among which Saints were twain more nobly clad
And decked than all the others : and these were
With such exceeding brightness wrapped around,
That sore amazement held who looked on them :
And, as it were in the procession's close,
One he espied so gloriously arrayed,
That he appeared a new-made Knight to be,
More honoured than the others. The said youth,
Seeing this vision, marvelled in himself,
And wist not what the stately pomp might mean,
Nor gan he heart to ask, but stood amazed
By reason of its sweetness. None the less,
When all the pomp had passed, he summoned heart,
Ran to the hindmost, and sore-quaking asked :
‘ Pray you, belovèd, tell me who are these
So wonderful, who go in this august
Procession ? ’ They replied : ‘ Know, little son,
We are all Brothers Minor, and come now
From the glory of Paradise.’ And he inquired :
‘ Who be those twain that shine beyond the rest ? ’
‘ These are Saint Francis and Saint Anthony,’
They answered, ‘ and this last, whom thou beholdest
So honoured, is a holy Brother, who died
Of late : the which, since he fought valiantly
Against temptations, and to the end endured,
Now to the glory of Paradise we lead

In triumph: and this raiment that we wear,
Of woof so fine, God gave us in exchange
For the rough tunics, which full patiently
We wore while in the Rule: and as for this
So glorious brightness, thou beholdst in us,
'Twas given of God for the meek penitence
And holy poverty the which we kept
With pureness and obedience to the end.
Deem it, then, no hard matter, little son,
To wear the sackcloth of the holy life,
Which in such fruit aboundeth: seeing that if,
Clad in Saint Francis' sackcloth, for Christ's love
Thou spurn the world, and mortify the flesh,
And 'gainst the Devil fight, and play the man,
Thou shalt, as we, the selfsame garments wear,
And radiance of glory.' When these words
Were spoken, the youth, returning to himself,
Unto the Guardian and the Brothers owned
His trespass, and from that time forth desired
The roughness of the penance and the robes,
And in great sanctity his life did end
Within the Order.

To the praise of Christ.

XX

THE CONVERSION OF THE WOLF OF
AGOBIO

WHAT time Saint Francis at Agobio dwelt,
Within Agobio's borders there appeared
A wolf, gigantic, terrible, and fierce,
The which devoured not beasts alone, but men,
So that the city-folk stood one and all
In mighty dread : for many a time he drew
Nigh to their city, and all men went armed
Who issued from the land, as though they went
To battle : nor yet who happed on him alone
Might aught prevail against him ; till for fear
Of the said wolf to such a pass they came,
That none abroad durst venture. For which cause
Saint Francis, having pity upon the folk,
Would fain this wolf encounter, though all men
Gave counsel to withhold him : wherefore he,
Making the sign of the most holy Cross,
Went forth with his companions, all his trust
In God reposing ; and when now the rest
Misdoubted to go further, he nathless
Took road toward the place where the wolf lay.
And lo ! in sight of many who had come forth
This miracle to witness, the said wolf
Made at Saint Francis with his mouth agape :

And, drawing near, Saint Francis over him
Did make the sign of the most holy Cross,
And called him, saying: 'Come hither, Brother
wolf;
I bid thee, in Christ's name, thou do no scathe
To me, or any.' O wondrous thing to tell !
No sooner had Saint Francis made the Cross,
Than straightway closed his mouth the terrible
wolf,
And stayed his running, and, lamb-like, on com-
mand
Came meekly, and, crouching at Saint Francis' feet,
Lay prone. Then spake Saint Francis: 'Brother
wolf,
Much mischief in these regions hast thou wrought,
And monstrous ills, slaying and ravaging
God's creatures, without leave of Him ; and not
Beasts only hast thou slaughtered and devoured
But hast e'en dared deface and slaughter men,
Made in God's image ; for the which thing's sake,
As thief and heinous murderer, thou deserv'st
The gibbet, and all men murmur and cry out
Against thee, and all this country is thy foe.
But, Brother wolf, fain would I now make peace
'Twixt thee and these, so thou sin not again,
And these forgive thee thy past trespasses,
And neither men nor dogs pursue thee more.'
Upon the utterance of these words, the wolf
With gesture of his body, and tail, and ears,
And bowing of the head, gave token plain

Of his assent to what Saint Francis said,
And will to abide thereby. Then once again
On this wise spake Saint Francis : ' Brother wolf,
Since thou art fain to make and keep this peace,
I hereby promise, so long as thou shalt live,
That I will cause the people of this land
To give thee food continually, that thou
No more feel hunger-pangs, for well I wot
That thou through hunger all these ills hast done.
But, seeing that I this grace for thee obtain,
O Brother wolf, I will thou promise me
No living thing henceforth, or man, or beast,
To injure : dost thou promise ? ' And the wolf
With bowing of the head gave token clear
That he so promised. And Saint Francis said :
' O Brother wolf, I will thou plight me troth
Of this thy promise, that I may trust thee well ' :
And, as Saint Francis to receive the pledge
Stretched forth his hand, the wolf upraised his paw,
And placed it in his hand familiarly,
Giving what token of good faith he could.
Then said Saint Francis : ' Now, O Brother wolf,
I charge thee, in the name of Jesu Christ,
That thou, misdoubting nothing, come with me ;
And let us go together in God's name
To ratify this treaty.' And the wolf
Obediently went with him, like a lamb
For meekness, so that all the citizens,
Beholding, marvelled greatly. And forthwith
Through the whole countryside this wonder spread,

So that all people, men and women-folk,
And great alike and small, and old and young,
Drew to the market-place, to see the wolf
Beside Saint Francis. And when all the folk
Were come together, Saint Francis rose to preach
And, amongst other things, spake also this :
How that for their transgressions God allowed
Such ravagings, and that the fire of hell,
Which for the damned doth last eternally,
Is far more perilous than a mere wolf's rage,
Which can but kill the body : ' how sorely then
Is hell's mouth to be dreaded, when the mouth
Of one small beast holds such a multitude
In fear and trembling ! Turn ye then to God,
Belovèd, and for your sins do penance meet ;
And God will set you free both from the wolf
In this time present, and from fires of hell
Hereafter.' And, the preaching done, ' Give ear,
My Brothers,' quoth Saint Francis, ' Brother wolf,
Who stands before you here, hath promised me
And pledged his troth, to be at peace with you,
No more in aught offending ; and do ye
Promise to give him for his daily food
Such things as shall be needful : and I here
Stand surety for him that this pact of peace
He will unbroken keep.' Then all the folk
As with one voice made promise without fail
To nourish him. And Saint Francis before all
Said to the wolf : ' Do thou too, Brother wolf,
Promise to keep with these the pact of peace

That thou do no offence to man, or beast,
 Or any creature.' And the wolf knelt down,
 And thereto bowed his head, with gestures mild
 Of body, and ears, and tail, as best he might,
 Shewing his will to keep the compact whole.

Then spake Saint Francis : ' Brother wolf, I will
 That, as without the gate thou'st plighted troth
 To this thy promise, so now thy promise-troth
 Here before all this people thou do plight,
 That of the surety which I gave for thee
 Thou wilt not cheat me.' Thereupon the wolf
 Raised his right paw, and in Saint Francis' hand
 Placed it : whereat, for this and other acts
 Aforesaid, in all hearts arose such joy
 And wonder—through devotion to the Saint,
 And eke for strangeness of the miracle,
 And with the wolf now being at peace—that all
 With one accord 'gan cry aloud to heaven
 Lauding and blessing God, that He had sent
 Saint Francis, by whose merits they were freed
 From the fell monster's maw.

And the said wolf

Thereafter in Agobio lived two years,
 Going from house to house, and door to door,
 Familiarly, not injuring any man,
 Nor being of any injured, and therewith
 Was nourished by the folk full courteously ;
 And roaming thus throughout the land, no dog
 E'er barked behind him. When at last two years
 Were ended, Brother wolf died of old age ;

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Wherewithal the city-folk grieved sore, for while
So tame they watched him through the city roam,
The better was Saint Francis' holy life
By them remembered.

To the praise of Christ.

XXI

CONCERNING SAINT FRANCIS AND
THE TURTLE-DOVES

A YOUTH there was, who certain turtle-doves
Had captured, and was carrying for to sell,
When, as it happed, Saint Francis, who was aye
To gentle creatures parlous pitiful,
Met him, and, looking on the turtle-doves
With piteous eye, said to the youth : ' Good youth,
I pray thee give these turtle-doves to me,
That birds so gentle and so innocent,
The which in holy Scripture likened are
To souls chaste, meek, and faithful, may not fall
Into the hands of cruel men, to slay.'
Anon, by God inspired, he gave them all
Unto Saint Francis, who, receiving them
Within his bosom, thus 'gan tenderly
Bespeak them : ' O my sisters, simple doves,
Chaste, innocent, why let yourselves be ta'en ?
Now fain would I deliver you from death,
And make you nests, that ye may fruitful be,
And multiply, as your Creator bade.'
Then went Saint Francis and made nests for all ;
And they, frequenting them, began lay eggs,
And hatch them e'en before the Brothers' eyes,
And with Saint Francis and the rest abode
Tamely consorting, like as they were fowls

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Fed ever by them : nay, nor e'er went forth,
Until Saint Francis blessed and bade them go.
And to the youth he said : 'Thou yet shalt be
A Brother of this Order, and serve God.'
And so it came to pass ; for the said youth
Became a Brother, and with great sanctity
Lived in the Order.

To Christ's praise. Amen.

XXII

HOW SAINT FRANCIS SAW THE
HOUSE SURROUNDED BY DE-
MONS, AND DROVE OUT ONE
WHO HAD ENTERED IN

ONCE, as Saint Francis prayed within the House
Of Portiuncula, God oped his eyes
So that he saw the whole House girt about
And, as it were with a great host, beset
By demons ; nathless none might enter in,
Because the Brothers were of such sanctity,
That into no man could the fiends win way.
But while they thus persisted, so it chanced
That of these Brothers, one did take offence
Against his fellow, and pondered in his heart
How to accuse and be avenged of him.
Wherefore, as he continued in this thought,
Anon the fiend, finding the door ajar,
Entered the House, and lodged him on the neck
Of the said Brother. Which when he beheld,
The careful shepherd, who kept ever watch
Over his sheep-fold, whereinto the wolf
Had entered to devour his little sheep,
At once let call that Brother to himself,
And bade him straight the venom of despite
Conceived against his neighbour, for which cause

He lay in the enemy's clutches, to disclose.
Whereat he, fearful thus to find himself
Detected by Saint Francis, all the spite
Revealed, and all the venom, and owned his fault,
And humbly sued for penance and for grace :
Which done, when now assoiled of his sin
He had received the penance, suddenly
Before Saint Francis' very eyes the fiend
Vanished ; and so from the fell monster's clutch,
By the good shepherd's kindly care, set free,
The Brother thanked God, and chastened and reproved
Back to the holy shepherd's fold returned,
And lived thereafter in great sanctity.
Unto the blessed Christ His praise. Amen.

XXIII

HOW SAINT FRANCIS CONVERTED
THE SOLDAN OF BABYLON

SAINT FRANCIS for Christ's faith by zeal impelled,
And by desire of martyrdom, set forth
With twelve of his companions on a time—
Right holy men—to journey oversea
Straight to the Soldan's Court at Babylon.
And at a country of the Saracens
Arriving, where the passes were all watched
By folk so cruel, that no Christian man
Might 'scape with life who passed there, as God willed
They were not slain, but taken, scourged, and bound,
And brought before the Soldan: before whom
Saint Francis, by the Holy Spirit taught,
Preached so devoutly of the faith of Christ,
That in the cause thereof he was e'en fain
To pass through fire. The Soldan thereupon
'gan deep devotion toward him entertain,
Both for the constancy of his faith, and that
Contempt of the world which in him he beheld—
Since at his hand no gift would he receive,
Albeit most poor—nor less for the desire
Which he beheld in him of martyrdom.
And him thenceforth the Soldan gladly heard,
And prayed return to him full oft, and gave
To his companions and himself free leave

To preach where pleased them, and vouchsafed a sign
Whereby they might 'scape hurt of any man.
Having this licence then, Saint Francis sent
Those chosen companions forth by two and two
To divers countries of the Saracens,
Christ's faith to preach. But seeing at the last
He no more fruit could in those regions reap,
By divine admonition he prepared,
With his companions all, to get him back
Among the faithful : and, when all were brought
Together, to the Soldan he returned,
And took his leave of him : to whom thus spake
The Soldan : ' Francis, to the faith of Christ
I fain would turn me, but I fear as now
To do it ; since, if these were ware thereof,
Both me and thee with all thy company
Would they destroy ; and seeing that thou mayst yet
Much good perform, and many things of weight
Have I to accomplish, fain would I fend off
Thy death and mine : but how I may be saved
Now teach me, since for aught that thou shalt bid
Myself am ready.' Thereat Saint Francis said :
' Now, Sire, will I take leave of thee, but when
To mine own country I have back returned,
And passed to heaven, then by the grace of God
After my death, according as God will,
Two of my Brothers will I send, from whom
The baptism of Christ shalt thou receive,
And shalt be saved, as my Lord Jesu Christ
Hath shewn me. And do thou thyself the while

Loose thee from all entanglement, that when
God's grace shall come to thee, thou mayst be found
Ready for faith and holiness.' And he
Both promised and performed it. And, this done,
Saint Francis with that reverend fellowship
Of blest companions turned him home again,
And after certain years, through bodily death,
Rendered his soul to God. And, fallen sick,
The Soldan for Saint Francis' promise looked,
And, guards at certain passes having set,
Gave charge that, if two Brothers passed that way
Clad in Saint Francis' habit, they should be
Brought to him straightway. At that time appeared
Saint Francis to two Brothers, bidding them
Make no delay, but to the Soldan go,
And compass his salvation, even as he
Had promised: the which Brothers instantly
Set forth, and crossed the sea, and by those guards
Were to the Soldan brought: and, seeing them,
The Soldan said: 'Now know I of a truth
That God hath sent His servants me to save,
The which Saint Francis promised, as by God
Revealed to him.' Receiving then the truth
By the said Brothers taught, and being thus
New-born in Christ, he of this sickness died,
And through Saint Francis' prayers his soul was saved.

XXIV

HOW SAINT FRANCIS HEALED A
LEPER IN BODY AND SOUL

SAINT FRANCIS, true disciple of the Christ,
While in this miserable life he lived,
With all his strength did strive to follow Christ,
The perfect Master: whence full oft befell,
By divine operation, that of whom
He healed the body, in the selfsame hour
God healed the soul, e'en as of Christ we read.
Wherefore not only did he gladly serve
Folk leprous, but moreover had enjoined
The Brothers of his Order through the world
Going, or staying, leprous folk to serve
Gladly for love of Christ, who for our sake
Willed to be deemed a leper. It befell
Once in a certain place, not far from where
Saint Francis sojourned, that the Brothers served
Sick folk and leprous in a hospital,
Wherein a leper so impatient was,
Froward, and petulant, that all men deemed,
And deemed him truly, by the Devil possessed.
For he so shamefully with words abused,
And beat, who served him, yea, and what was worse,
With such outrageous blasphemies reviled
Christ and His Holy Mother, that by no means
Might there be found, who serve him would, or could.

And though the wrongs and insults to themselves
Full patiently the Brothers strove to bear,
Merit of patience to increase thereby,
Yet, since their consciences those wrongs to Christ,
And to His Mother, brooked not to endure,
At length resolved they to abandon him,
Yet would not, till the thing was notified
In order to Saint Francis. And so soon
As they had made it known, Saint Francis came
To this so fractious leper, and drew near,
And did salute him, saying: 'God give thee peace,
My dearest Brother!' And the leper replied
Bitterly: 'Nay, what peace to me from God,
Who hath ta'en from me peace and every good,
And made me foul and noisome utterly?'

Saint Francis said: 'Have patience, little son,
Since ills of body are given to us of God
In this world for soul's saving, seeing that they
Are of great merit, when borne patiently.'

Replied the sick man: 'How can I endure
In peace the pain that racks me, night and day?
Nor of my sickness am I racked alone,
But those thy Brethren, whom thou gav'st to serve,
Entreat me worse, nor serve not as they should.'

Thereat, by revelation from on high,
Saint Francis, knowing this leper was possessed
By an ill spirit, gat him to his prayers,
And earnestly made suit to God for him.

And, his prayer ended, he returned, and said:
'Myself am fain to serve thee, little son,

Since with these others thou art ill-content.'
Quoth the sick man: 'It liketh me, nathless
What better than the rest canst thou?' Replied
Saint Francis: 'I will do whate'er thou wouldest.'
Quoth the sick man: 'I will from head to foot
Thou wash me, seeing that so corrupt am I,
That I myself endure not.' Then forthwith
Saint Francis bade boil water, with sweet herbs
A many, and stripped him, and began
With his own hands to wash him, and meanwhile
A Brother poured on water; and behold!
By divine virtue, and by miracle,
Where with his holy hands Saint Francis touched,
The leprosy departed, and the flesh
Was healèd utterly. And, as to heal
The flesh began, so too 'gan heal the soul:
Wherefore, perceiving health new-born in him,
Contrition sore the leper now 'gan feel,
And penitence for his sins, and fell anon
To bitterest weeping; insomuch that, while
His body was made clean of leprosy,
By washing of the water, so from sin
Was his soul cleansed by penitential tears.
And now, both body and soul made wholly clean,
Humbly did he confess his fault, and said
In a loud voice lamenting: 'Woe is me!
Worthy of hell am I for outrage done
And insult to the Brothers, and toward God
For mine impatience and blaspheming words.'
And so for fifteen days in bitter plaints

For sin persévered he, and prayers to God
For mercy, and full confession to the priest.
And when so marked a miracle, as God
Had by his hands performed, Saint Francis saw,
Returning thanks to God, he parted thence,
And 'gat him to a country-place far off ;
Wishing in his humility to shun
All worldly glory, and in every deed
God's glory and honour, not his own, to seek.
Soon, as God willed it, the said leper, healed
In body and soul, did, after fifteen days
Of penitence, sicken of a new plague, and, armed
With holy church-rites, died in sanctity,
And his soul passed to Paradise. And lo !
For sign thereof, his spirit in the air
Appeared unto Saint Francis, as he prayed,
And said to him : 'Rememberest thou me ?'
'Who art thou ?' quoth Saint Francis. He replied :
'I am that leper, whom the blessed Christ
Healed through thy merits, and to-day I pass
To Paradise: wherefore to God and thee
My thanks I render: blessed be thy soul
And body, and blessed be thy words and deeds :
For that by thee shall many souls be saved
Throughout the world : and know there is no day
When the holy Angels, and what Saints beside,
Return not thanks to God for the blest fruits
Gathered in divers regions of the world
By thee and by thine Order: for which cause
Be comforted, thank God, and still abide

100 HOW SAINT FRANCIS HEALED A LEPER

Beneath His benediction.' And, these words
Spoken, anon he passed into the heaven,
And therewithal Saint Francis did remain
Much comforted.

Unto the praise of Christ.

XXV

HOW THREE ROBBERS WERE CONVERTED BY SAINT FRANCIS

ONCE, as Saint Francis through the region went
Of Borgo San Sepolcro, and was now
Passing a certain village, that had name
Monte Casale, came to him a youth,
Noble and delicately reared, who said :
' Fain am I, father, of thy Brotherhood
To be.' Saint Francis answered : ' Little son,
Young art thou, noble, and delicately reared :
Belike thou couldst not bear the poverty
And roughness that is ours.' And he replied :
' Are ye not men, my father, even as I ?
What ye can bear, then, I, please God, shall bear.'
And since this answer liked Saint Francis well,
Within the Order he forthwith received,
And blessed, and named him Brother Angelo,
And with such grace this youth bestowed himself,
That soon Saint Francis made him of the House
Of Monte Casale Guardian. At that time
Three famous robbers did the land infest,
Who wrought much evil through the countryside :
And one day, coming to the Brothers' House,
They prayed the Guardian, Brother Angelo,
Some food to give them : and the Guardian
Replied on this wise, harshly chiding them :

‘Robbers and cruel murderers, shame ye not
To reave the toils of others ? Nay, but more !
Barefaced and insolent ye would e’en devour
The alms that on God’s servants are bestowed :
Unworthy are ye earth should bear your weight,
Since man, nor God who made you, ye regard :
Begone then, and affront our eyes no more !’
So fuming, in high dudgeon off they went.
And lo ! Saint Francis, who had gone forth, returned
With wallet of bread and flask of wine, the which
He had begged with his companion : and when now
The Guardian told how he had driven them off,
Saint Francis sharply chid him, saying therein
He had borne him cruelly, for that ‘sinful folk
Better by sweetness are than harsh rebuke
Brought back to God : whence God our Master saith—
Whose gospel we have promised to obey—
“They that be whole do no physician need,
But the sick rather” ; and that He had come
Not righteous, nay, but sinful folk, to call
Unto repentance ; wherefore many a time
He ate with them. Since then thou hast herein
'Gainst Charity and God’s holy gospel wrought,
By holy Obedience I command thee take
Forthwith this wallet of bread which I have begged,
And eke this flask of wine, and get thee gone,
And diligently pursue o’er hill and vale,
Until thou find them, and, when found, from me
With all this bread present them, and this wine ;
And kneel before them, and therewith confess

Humbly thy fault of cruelty, and so
Entreat them, as from me, to sin no more,
But fear God, nor offend their neighbour, which
If they will do, I pledge me to provide
For all their needs, and give them food and drink
Continually: and when thou hast so said,
Hither return right humbly.' Therewithal,
While the said Guardian was gone forth to do
His bidding, Saint Francis gat him to his prayers,
Beseeching God those robbers' hearts to melt,
And turn them unto penitence. Meanwhile
The obedient Guardian, coming up with them,
Gave them the bread and wine, nor left undone
Aught that Saint Francis bade. And it pleased God,
As of Saint Francis' alms those robber-folk
Were eating, they 'gan say among themselves :
' Alas, poor wretches ! what hard pains of hell
Await us, who not only go about
Robbing our neighbours, dealing blows and wounds,
But likewise slaying, and none the less for deeds
So ill and heinous feel no whit remorse
Of conscience, nay, nor fear of God ! and see !
This holy Brother, who hath come to us,
For certain words the which he justly spake
Against our wickedness, hath humbly owned
His fault, and brought us bread and wine to boot,
And from the holy Father's lips so large
A promise ! These Brothers verily be Saints
Of God, who merit Paradise ; and we
Sons of perdition without end, who now

Merit the pains of hell, and day by day
But add to our damnation : nor know we
If for the sins wrought hitherto by us
We may of God find mercy.' As one of them
These and like words did speak, the other twain
Said : ' Verily sooth thou speakest, but behold !
What must we do ? ' ' Let us e'en go,' quoth he,
' Unto Saint Francis : if he give us hope
That for our sins we may God's mercy find,
Do we whate'er he bids us, that our souls
We may deliver from the pains of hell.'
This counsel liked the others, so all the three
Went to Saint Francis with one mind, and said :
' For many heinous sins that we have done,
Father, God's mercy we not think to find ;
Nathless, if thou hast any hope that God
Will take us to His mercy, we are here
Fain to perform thy bidding, and with thee
Do penance.' Then Saint Francis welcomed them
In lovingkindness and in charity,
With manifold examples comforting
Their hearts, and of God's mercy made them sure,
Yea, promised to obtain it them of God,
Shewing them how God's mercy hath no bound,
And, though our sins were boundless, yet the grace
Of God is greater, and how the blessed Christ,
As Gospel saith, and holy Apostle Paul,
Came into this world, sinners to redeem.
By the which words, and others like to these,
Admonished, the three robbers did renounce

The devil and all his works, and were received
Into the Order at Saint Francis' hand,
And 'gan to do great penance : and twain of them
Lived after their conversion a brief while,
And passed to Paradise ; but the third survived,
And, of his sins repenting, set himself
To do such penance, that for fifteen years
Continuously, save for the Lenten use,
The which he kept in such wise as the rest,
At other time, three days o' the week he fared
On bread and water, going bare-foot still,
One tunic on his back, and, Matins o'er,
Slept never. About that time Saint Francis passed
From out this miserable life. He then
Having this penance many years fulfilled,
Lo ! after Matins came to him one night
Of sleep such strong desire, that by no means
Might he refrain from slumber, or keep watch,
As he was wont to do. And since from sleep
Refrain he could not, no, nor pray, at last
He gat him to repose, and suddenly,
Soon as he laid his head down, he was rapt
And borne in spirit to a great mountain-height,
Where was a precipice exceeding deep,
On this side and on that rocks torn and jagg'd,
And broken boulders jutting from the rocks ;
So that adown that precipice to peer
Was fearsome gazing. And the Angel-form,
The which did lead this Brother, pushed him on,
And threw him down the precipice : and he,

Tumbling and bounding on from rock to rock,
From boulder on to boulder, reached at last
The bottom of that precipice piecemeal
Mangled and shattered, as it seemed to him.
And as in this sore plight on earth he lay,
His leader thus bespake him: 'Get thee up,
For a long journey thou hast yet to make.'
Replied the Brother: 'An ill-advisèd man
Thou seem'st, and cruel, who see'st me like to die
Of the fall that hath thus shattered me, and yet
Biddest me rise.' Then came the Angel near,
And with a touch healed perfectly his limbs,
And made him sound. And, after, shewed he him
A mighty plain full of sharp cutting stones,
And thorns and briars, and said through all that plain
He must pass bare-foot till he reached the end,
Where a fierce furnace he espied, the which
He needs must enter. When the Brother had passed
O'er all that plain with anguish and sore hurt,
'Get thee into this furnace,' said to him
The Angel, 'for needs must thou.' He replied,
'Alas! how cruel a guide thou art to me
Who seest me by this agonizing plain
Brought nigh to death, and bidst me now for rest
Enter yon blazing furnace!' And he looked
And in the furnace many devils saw
With iron forks in hand, wherewith, since he
Shirked entrance, they of a sudden thrust him in.
And having now within the furnace passed,
He looked about him, and saw one, had been

His godfather, on fire from head to foot:
And he inquired: 'Unhappy godfather,
How cam'st thou hither?' And he replied: 'Go on
A little further yet, and thou shalt find
My wife, thy gossip, who will relate to thee
The cause of our damnation.' Thereupon
The Brother went onward, till before his eyes
Lo! the said gossip, wrapt in fire, and penned
In a corn-bushel that was all aflame!
And he inquired: 'Unhappy gossip, say
Wherfore to this fell torment art thou come?'
'Because in the great famine-time,' quoth she,
'The which Saint Francis prophesied erewhile,
I and my husband of the wheat and grain
We sold did give false measure; wherfore I
Penned in this bushel burn.' Upon which word
The Angel led this Brother, and thrust him forth
From out the furnace, and then said to him:
'Gird thee a fearful journey to perform,
The which thou needs must travel.' And he spake
Complaining bitterly: 'O most cruel guide,
Who hast no pity upon me! for thou seest
That in this furnace I am all burnt up,
And yet wouldest lead me by a perilous road
And fearful!' And thereat the Angel touched,
And made him whole and strong. And after this
He brought him to a bridge he might not cross
Without great peril, seeing that it was frail,
And narrow, and very slippery, and had
No rail to flank it: and thereunder lapsed

A terrible river full of serpent-things,
Dragons and scorpions, that sent up therefrom
A stench most noisome ; and the Angel said :
' Cross now this bridge, since cross it needs thou
must.'

' How shall I skill to cross it,' he replied,
' So that I fall not in this perilous flood ? '

The Angel said : ' Come after me, and set
Thy feet where thou shalt see that I set mine,
And so shalt thou cross well.' The Brother crossed
Behind the Angel, as he had bidden him,
To midmost of the bridge, and as he stood
Thus at its midmost, forth the Angel flew,
And left him, and to a great mountain-height
Departed, from the said bridge far enow
On the other side. And he marked well the place
Whither had flown the Angel ; but, left thus,
Without a guide, and gazing therebelow,
He saw those terrible monsters standing forth,
Heads above water, and with mouths agape,
Ready to swallow him, if he fell. Thereat
Such terror held him, that he wist no whit
Or what to do, or say ; since turn him back
He could not, nor go forward. Whereupon
Seeing himself in strait so sore, that he
None other refuge had, but God alone,
He bowed him, and in both arms clasped the bridge,
And with his whole heart, weeping, unto God
Commended him, if peradventure He
Of His most holy ruth might succour him.

And, the prayer done, him seemed that he began
To put forth wings ; whereat with mighty joy
He waited for their growing, that he might fly
Beyond the bridge, whither the Angel flew.
Then, after some time, in his strong desire
To cross the bridge, he set himself to fly,
But, since the wings were not yet large enow,
Fell on the bridge, and off the feathers dropped.
Wherefore once more he clasped the bridge, to God,
As at the first, commanding him : and when
His prayer was done, a second time he seemed
To put forth wings, but once more waited not
Their perfect growth, and so, before the time
Essaying to fly, fell on the bridge again,
And off the feathers dropped. And, seeing that he
Had fallen by reason of the haste he had
To fly before the time, he 'gan to speak
Thus with himself : ' If I shall put forth wings
A third time, of a surety I will wait
Till they be grown so large that I can fly,
Nor fall again.' And, thinking on this wise,
He saw himself the third time put forth wings,
And long he waited till they were full large ;
And in this putting forth of wings once, twice,
And thrice, it seemed to him he had waited more
Than hundred years and fifty. And at last
For the third time he rose to fly, and up
With all his strength flew even to the place
Where the Angel was : and at the palace-door
Knocking, whereinto had the Angel flown,

The porter asked him : ' Who art thou, that hast
Come hither ? ' ' A Brother Minor I,' quoth he.
Then said the porter : ' Tarry, that I may bring
Saint Francis, for to learn if thee he know.'
And, while to fetch Saint Francis he was gone,
He fell to gazing on the marvellous walls
Of the said palace ; and these walls appeared
Of such translucent brightness, that he saw
The Choirs of Saints, and what was wrought within,
Full clearly. And, as spell-bound thus he stood
Gazing thereon, behold ! Saint Francis came,
With Brother Bernard, and with Brother Giles ;
And in Saint Francis' train so vast a host
Of Saints and saintly women, who his life
Had followed, as nigh numberless appeared.
And, drawing near, unto the porter spake
Saint Francis : ' Let him enter, seeing that he
Is of my Brothers.' And, once entered in,
Such sweetness felt he, that he clean forgot
All he had suffered, as though it ne'er had been.
And now Saint Francis, leading him within,
Shewed him a many marvellous things, and thus
At length bespake him : ' Thou must needs return
Unto the world, my son, and there abide
Seven days, wherein do thou prepare thyself
With all devotion diligently ; for I
After those seven days will come for thee,
And with me thereupon shalt thou return
Unto this dwelling of the blest.' And lo !
Saint Francis was in marvellous robe arrayed.

Embroidered o'er with stars right glorious ;
And his five stigmata were as five stars
For glory, and of such splendour, that the whole
Palace they did illumine with their rays.
And Brother Bernard had upon his head
A crown of stars full beauteous to behold,
And Brother Giles in wondrous light was decked ;
And 'midst them many another Saint he knew,
Whom in the world he ne'er had looked upon.
So, of Saint Francis taking now his leave,
Albeit full loth, returned he back to earth
Waking ; and lo ! as to himself he came,
And his own wits, the Brothers rang for Prime ;
So that he had not save from Matin-hour
Been of that vision holden until Prime,
Albeit to him it had seemed many years.
And, having all this vision point by point
Told o'er, within the seven days he fell
Sick of a fever ; then on the eighth day
Saint Francis, as he had promised, came for him
With a vast multitude of glorious Saints,
And to the kingdom of the blissful ones
Of life eternal did conduct his soul.

Unto the blessed Christ His praise. Amen.

XXVI

HOW SAINT FRANCIS WENT TO
BOLOGNA, AND CONVERTED TWO
SCHOLARS BY HIS PREACHING

WHEN to Bologna city on a time
Saint Francis came, the city-folk ran all
Together for to see him ; and so dense
The throng of people, that with much ado
Scarce could they gain the Square : and when the
Square
Was now with men and women wholly filled,
And eke with scholars, in their midst uprose
Saint Francis, and 'gan preach what words soe'er
The Holy Spirit taught him : and he preached
Matters so wondrous, that it seemed to them
There preached an Angel, rather than a man :
Yea, and the heavenly words he spake appeared
Like to keen arrows which did pierce their hearts
Who heard him, that great multitudes of men
And women-folk, as he so preached, were turned
To penitence. And of this number were
Two noble students from Ancona's March,
Whereof one Pellegrino had to name,
And the other Ruggieri : the which both,
By divine inspiration touched at heart,
Through the said preaching, to Saint Francis came,
Saying their whole wish was to quit the world,

And become Brothers. Then Saint Francis, knowing
By revelation from on high that these
Were sent of God, and would the holy life
Observe within the Order, when he saw
How great their fervour, gladly welcomed them
Saying: 'Thou, Pellegrino, from henceforth
The lowly life shalt follow, and serve thou
The Brethren, Ruggieri.' And e'en so
It was: for Pellegrino would not come
As Cleric, but lay Brother, though right learn'd,
And master of canonic law; by which
Humility such perfection he attained
In holiness, that Brother Bernard even,
Saint Francis' first-born, spake of him as one
Of the most perfect Brothers in this world.
Finally Brother Pellegrino passed
From this life to the beatific life
Nor without many miracles, or wrought
Before his death, or after. Therewithal
Did Brother Ruggieri faithfully
And with devotion serve the Brotherhood
In holiness and humbleness of life,
And with Saint Francis to close friendship came;
And many secrets unto him revealed
Saint Francis. And, when now made Minister
Of the Province of Ancona's March, long time
In utmost peace, full wisely, held he sway.
After some time, God suffered visit him
A right sore tempting of his soul, that he
In trouble and anguish sternly schooled himself

With fasts, and tears, and scourgings, night and day,
Yet none the more could that temptation oust ;
But many a time he was in deep despair,
And deemed himself forsaken of God. And still
Continuing desperate, for last remedy
Unto Saint Francis he resolved to go,
Thus reasoning : ' If with kindly countenance
Saint Francis, as mine old familiar friend,
Receive me, then shall I believe that God
Will yet have pity upon me ; but, if not,
'Twill be a sign I am forsaken of God.'

So forth he fared, and to Saint Francis went,
Who in the Bishop's Palace at that time,
Lay at Assisi, grievous sick. To him
Was the said Brother's whole temptation shewn
By God, and his despair, and therewithal
His purpose, and his coming. Whereupon
Saint Francis straight for Brother Leo sent,
And Brother Masseo, saying to them : ' Go forth,
And meet upon the way my most dear Son
And Brother, Ruggieri, and from me
Embrace him and salute, and say to him
That of all Brothers that are in the world
In special love I hold him.' So they went,
And Brother Ruggieri on the way
Found, and embraced him, and delivered all
Saint Francis had enjoined them. Whereupon
Was such deep consolation in his soul,
And sweetness, that he seemed indeed as one
Beside himself, and, rendering thanks to God

With his whole heart, went onward, and arrived
Where lay Saint Francis sick. Who, when he heard
That Brother Ruggieri now drew nigh,
Albeit right ill at ease, no whit the less
Uprose, and went to meet, and tenderly
Embraced him, saying : ' My dearest little son
And Brother, Ruggieri, among all
The Brothers of the world in special love
I hold thee.' And, this said, he made the sign
Of the most holy Cross upon his brow,
And kissed him there, and, after, said to him :
' My little son most dear, for thy great gain
And merit hath God this trial thee allowed :
But, of the said gain if thou wouldest no more,
Then have it not.' O wonderful ! for lo !
Soon as Saint Francis spoke, forthwith the whole
Temptation left him, even as he had ne'er
In all his life felt it ; and he remained
Fulfilled of comfort.

To the praise of God.

XXVII

HOW BROTHER BERNARD OF QUINTAVALLE WAS ENTRANCED FROM MATINS UNTIL NONES

WHAT grace full many a time God wrought in those
Poor gospellers, who for God's love the world
Abandoned, was in Brother Bernard found
Of Quintavalle, who, when he had donned
Saint Francis' habit, was oft rapt in God
Through contemplation of celestial things.
And, among other times, a time there came,
When, for to hear Mass being in church, and all
His mind in God uplifted, he became
Through contemplation so absorbed in God—
Ravished and rapt—that when the Body of Christ
Was raised aloft, he nothing saw thereof,
Nor kneeled, nor drew his hood back, as did all
The others there, but, without blink of eye,
Gazing thus fixedly, continued so
From Matins until Nones, regarding naught:
And, after Nones, come to himself, he went
Crying in tones of wonder through the House:
‘ O Brothers, Brothers, Brothers ! there is none
So great or noble in all this land, that, were
Some glorious, gold-filled palace promised him,
He would not gladly bear a sack of dung

Treasure to win so noble ! ' Even for this
Celestial treasure, to God-lovers all
Promised, was Brother Bernard foreordained,
And was in thought so lifted up to God
That fifteen years unceasingly he went
Ever with heart and face upturned to heaven,
Nor all that time his hunger quelled, albeit
Of what was set before him he would eat
A little : for he was wont to say, whereof
A man not tasted, practised he therefrom
No perfect abstinence : but true abstinence
Is to be temperate in such things as are
Sweet to the palate. Whereby he attained
Such clarity and light of intellect,
That even great Doctors flocked to him, to probe
Deep and hard questions, or solve knotty points
Of Scripture ; and with ease he made them clear.
And, since his mind was wholly loosed and freed
From earthly things, he, like the swallow, flew
Upward through contemplation : whence one time
For twenty days, once thirty, he remained
Alone upon the loftiest mountain-tops,
In meditation upon heavenly things.
For which cause Brother Giles would say of him,
That to none else of men was given this gift
That unto Brother Bernard had been given
Of Quintavalle, to wit, that, swallow-like,
Upon the wing he fed : and many a time,
For this most excellent grace he had of God,
Saint Francis loved to talk with him by night

Or day ; whence sometimes they were night-long
found

Together, rapt in God, within a wood,
Where they had met, they twain, to speak of God,
The ever, and for ever, blest. Amen.

XXVIII

HOW THE DEVIL APPEARED TO
BROTHER RUFFINO IN THE FORM
OF CHRIST

BROTHER RUFFINO, of Assisi's folk
One of the noblest, a right saintly man,
Companion of Saint Francis, on a time
Was by the Devil with his most rude assaults,
Touching predestination, buffeted ;
Whereby full heavy of soul he was and sad,
For that the Devil put into his heart
That he was damned, nor numbered among those
To endless life predestined, and that all
He did within the Order was but lost.
And, this temptation ever day by day
Continuing, for shame's sake he shewed it not
Unto Saint Francis, nor nathless forbore
His wonted orisons and fasts to keep :
Whereat the Adversary anon 'gan add
Sorrow to sorrow, and, over and above
Strifes inward, 'gan beset him from without
With lying phantoms. Wherefore on a time
In the form of the Crucified he appeared to him,
And said : ' O Brother Ruffino, wherefore thus
Afflict thyself with penances and prayers,
Seeing thou art not numbered among those
To endless life predestined ? Well I wot,

Believe me, whom I have chosen and foreordained ;
And, as for Peter Bernardone's son,
Believe him not if he say contrary,
Nor ask him of this matter ; since nor he
Nor any else doth wot of it, but I,
Who am the Son of God. Believe me then
Thou art full surely numbered with the damned :
Nor hath it pleased me make of mine elect
Thy Father, Peter Bernardone's son ;
Nay, neither him nor thee ; damned therewithal
His father is, and duped who followeth him.'
These words thus spoken, he suddenly disappeared ;
And Brother Ruffino 'gan therewith to be
So darkly overshadowed by the Prince
Of darkness, that anon all faith and love
He lost, which for Saint Francis he had had,
Nor list he tell him aught of it. But lo !
What to the holy Father was not told
By Brother Ruffino, that the Holy Ghost
Revealed to him : wherefore it came to pass
That, when Saint Francis saw in spirit how great
The peril of the said Brother was, he sent
To call him Brother Masseo ; unto whom
Quoth Brother Ruffino bitterly : ' What have I
To do with Brother Francis ? ' Then, fulfilled
With divine wisdom, Brother Masseo saw
The trickery of the Devil, and said to him :
' O Brother Ruffino, this then know'st thou not,
That as God's Angel Brother Francis is,
Who hath so many souls i' the world illumed,

Yea, from whom we the grace of God received ?
Whence by all means I will thou come to him,
For that I see full clearly thou art duped
Of the Devil.' And Brother Ruffino, at this word,
Arose, and to Saint Francis went, and when
Saint Francis saw him coming from afar,
' O Brother Ruffino,' he 'gan cry to him,
' Thou naughty one, in whom hast thou believed ? '
And, Brother Ruffino coming up to him,
Saint Francis point by point recounted o'er
His whole temptation by the Evil One,
Inward or outward, shewing him full plain
That he which had appeared to him was not
Christ, but the Devil, and by no means must he
Yield to his prompting ; ' but, when saith the Fiend :
" Damned art thou," then make answer : " Ope thy
mouth,
And take this filth therein." And let this be
Thy token he is the Evil One ; for when
Thou thus shalt answer, he will straightway flee.
Hereby too mayst thou know he was the Devil,
In that thy heart he hardened to all good,
Which is his proper office ; whereas Christ,
The blessèd, hardeneth ne'er the faithful heart,
Nay, softeneth it, as by the Prophet's mouth
He saith : " Your stone heart I will take away,
And give you a heart of flesh." And when he saw
How that Saint Francis thus in order told
Both his temptation and the manner thereof,
Pricked by his words, 'gan Brother Ruffino weep

Full loud, and at Saint Francis' feet to fall,
And humbly own his fault in having hid
This his temptation. Thus did he remain
Consoled and strengthened by the admonishments
Of the holy Father, and to better things
Changed utterly. At the last Saint Francis said :
‘ Go and confess thee, nor abate thy zeal,
Or wonted prayers ; and of a surety know
That this temptation shall to thy great gain
And solace tend, as shortly thou shalt prove.’
Then Brother Ruffino to his cell returned
Within the wood ; and as with many tears
He was a-praying, behold ! the Adversary
In outward guise like unto God ! who said :
‘ O Brother Ruffino, spake I not to thee
“ Believe not Peter Bernardone’s son,
And weary not thyself with tears and prayers,
Since thou art damned ” ? What need to plague thee
thus
The while thou livest, and after death be damned ? ’
And suddenly Brother Ruffino answered him :
‘ Open thy mouth, and take this filth therein ’ :
Wherewithal the Devil in wrath straight gat him gone,
And with such storm and shaking of the rocks,
Which from the mountain that soared hard at hand
Came tumbling, that the hurly of those rocks
Lasted full long, as they fell ruining down :
And with so vast a crash, rolled each on each,
Smote they together, that the nether plain
Was all lit up with terrible gleams of fire.

And at the fearful uproar wrought thereby
Saint Francis and his fellows from the House
Came issuing in great wonder, to behold
What this new thing might be. And to this day
That mighty ruin of the rocks is seen.
Then Brother Ruffino did full plain perceive
It was the Devil had fooled him. Whereupon,
Returning to Saint Francis, once again
He cast him to the earth, and owned his fault ;
And him Saint Francis with sweet words consoled,
And sent him to his cell quite comforted ;
Wherein as full devoutly he abode,
Appeared the blessed Christ, and all his soul
With love divine rekindled, saying to him :
‘ In this thou hast done well, my son, that thou
Believedst Brother Francis, seeing that he
Who had distressed thee was the Devil, but I
Am Christ, thy Master ; and, that thou mayst know
Surely that I am Christ, this sign thereof
I give thee : never, while thy life-days last,
Shalt thou know sorrow or heart-heaviness.’
And, with the word, Christ vanished, leaving him
There with such joy and sweetness of the soul,
And mind-uplifting, that by day and night
He was absorbed and rapt in God. Withal
From that time forth so strong he grew in grace
And surety of salvation, that indeed
He was changed wholly to another man,
And would have passed both day and night in prayer
And meditation upon things divine,

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Had the rest suffered it. And for this cause
Saint Francis wont to say of him—to wit,
Of Brother Ruffino—that he was indeed
In this life canonized by Jesu Christ,
Nor, save when present, would spare to call him Saint
Ruffino, though yet living on the earth.

Unto the praise of Jesu Christ. Amen.

XXIX

HOW SAINT FRANCIS BADE BROTHER
RUFFINO PREACH NAKED, AND
AFTER DID THE LIKE HIMSELF

Now the said Brother Ruffino was so far
Through ceaseless contemplation lost in God,
That as one senseless he became, and mute,
And spake full seldom: therewithal nor grace
To preach had he, nor eloquence of tongue.
Nathless Saint Francis bade him on a time
Go to Assisi, and preach unto the folk,
As God inspired him. Thereupon replied
Brother Ruffino: 'Reverend Father mine,
Prithee forbear me this, and send me not,
For that thou knowest I have no gift to preach,
And am a simple, witless man.' Then said
Saint Francis: 'Since thou not obey'st forthright,
By holy Obedience I command thee now
Strip to the waist, and to Assisi go,
And, entering there a church, in thy bare skin
Preach to the people.' Upon this behest,
Brother Ruffino doffed his gear, and so
Went to Assisi, and, entering a church,
Did reverence to the altar, and anon
Clomb to the pulpit, and essayed to preach:
Whereat the children and the men 'gan laugh,
And say among themselves: 'These fellows, see,

Practise such penances, that they become
 Fools, and beside themselves.' In the meantime
 Saint Francis of the prompt obedience shewn
 By Brother Ruffino—'mong Assisi's folk
 One of the noblest-born—bethinking him,
 And of the harsh behest himself had given,
 'Gan now take blame unto himself, and say :
 'From whence hast thou such arrogance, O son
 Of Peter Bernardone, thou vile wretch,
 Thus to bid Brother Ruffino, being one
 Of the most noble of Assisi's folk,
 Go preach to the people naked, like a fool ?
 By God, thou shalt in thine own person prove
 The task thou lay'st on others.' And suddenly
 In fervour of soul he likewise doffed his clothes,
 And went to Assisi, and along with him
 Took Brother Leo, his own garb to bear,
 And Brother Ruffino's. When the Assisan folk
 Saw him like-fashioned, they made mock of him,
 Deeming both him and Brother Ruffino crazed
 By o'ermuch penance. And Saint Francis passed
 Within the church, as Brother Ruffino now
 These words was preaching: 'Flee the world, belovèd,
 And let go sin ; render to all their dues,
 An ye would 'scape from hell ; keep God's commands,
 God and your neighbour loving, would ye go
 To heaven ; and if heaven's kingdom ye would win,
 Do penance.' Then Saint Francis, all unclad,
 Clomb to the pulpit, and began to preach
 In wise so wondrous of contempt o' the world,

Of holy penitence, willing poverty,
And fervent longing for the realm of heaven,
Yea, of the nakedness and shame withal
Of the passion of Christ Jesu, that all those
Who heard that preaching 'gan to weep right sore,
With such devoutness and contrition of heart
As might not be believed: nor only there,
But throughout all Assisi, on that day,
There was such weeping for the passion of God,
As like thereto was never. And the folk
Being in such wise by Saint Francis' act,
And Brother Ruffino's, cheered and edified,
Anon Saint Francis donned his gear again,
And Brother Ruffino his: and, thus re-clad,
Back to the House of Portiuncula
Returned they, glorifying and praising God,
Who had vouchsafed them grace, through scorn of self
Themselves to conquer, and God's little sheep
By good ensample edify, and shew
How profitable a thing to spurn the world.
Yea, and so waxed to-them-ward on that day
The people's worship, that who might but touch
Their garments' hem did deem himself thereby
Blessèd.

Unto the praise of Christ. Amen.

XXX

HOW SAINT FRANCIS KNEW THE
VIRTUES AND THE FRAILTIES
OF HIS COMPANIONS

As saith in the Gospel our Lord Jesu Christ :
'I know my sheep, and eke am known of Mine,'
E'en so the holy Francis, Father blest,
Like a good shepherd, every merit knew
And grace of his companions, as by God
Revealed to him, nor less their faults discerned ;
And therefore skilled he to provide for all
Best remedies—to wit, humbling the proud,
And lifting up the lowly, chiding vice,
And praising virtue : even as one reads
Touching the revelations made to him
Of his first family ; among which we find
That while Saint Francis in a certain House
With the said family held discourse of God—
Brother Ruffino being at that discourse
Not present with them, for that he abode
Within the wood in meditation rapt—
They still continuing in discourse of God,
Lo ! Brother Ruffino issued from the wood,
And passed some distance from them. Whereupon
Saint Francis, seeing him, to his comrades turned,
And asked them saying: 'Whom deem ye in your
hearts

The holiest soul God hath i' the world to-day ?' And, these replying they deemed it was his own, Saint Francis said to them : ' Brothers belov'd, I verily am the vilest man God hath In this world : but behold ye now where comes Brother Ruffino issuing from the wood ? Lo ! it hath been revealed to me of God, His soul is one of the three holiest souls God hath in this world : and I say to you, And do avouch the same, I would not stick To call him Saint Ruffino while he lives, Seeing his soul hath been confirmed in grace, And sanctified in heaven, and canonized By my Lord Jesu Christ.' These words nathless, Brother Ruffino being by, ne'er spake Saint Francis. In like manner he discerned The frailties of the Brothers : so he read Brother Elias clearly, many a time Rebuking him for arrogance, and likewise To Brother John o' the Chapel prophesied That by the throat himself should hang himself ; And so too told that Brother how he saw The devil that gripped him by the throat, when chid For disobedience : beside many more, Whose virtues and defects he clearly knew, As was by God revealed to him. Amen.

XXXI

HOW BROTHER MASSEO OBTAINED
THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY

THE first companions of Saint Francis strove
With all their strength to be in earthly things
Full poor, and rich in virtues, whereby man
To the true heavenly riches doth attain
That are eternal. Now there came a day,
Being met to speak of God, that one of them
Did this example give: 'A mighty friend
Of God there was, who had great grace of life
In act and contemplation, and withal
Was of such wondrous deep humility,
That of all sinners himself deemed he chief:
The which humility did sanctify
And strengthen him in grace, still making him
To grow in virtue and the gifts of God,
Nor ever into sinful act let fall.'

When Brother Masseo of humility
Heard tell such wondrous matters, witting well
It was the treasure of eternal life,
Such love and longing 'gan to fire his soul
For this same lowly virtue, that anon,
In ardour deep raising his face to heaven,
He vowed and straitly purposed nevermore
To joy in this world till within his soul
He felt that virtue perfectly. Thenceforth

Continued he nigh prisoned in his cell,
Wearing the flesh down with fasts, vigils, prayers,
And loud lamentings in the face of God,
To win from Him that virtue, lacking which
Worthy of hell he deemed him, and wherewith
Yon friend of God, of whom he had heard tell,
Was dowered so richly. And, in this desire
For many days continuing, came a day
When Brother Masseo passed within the wood
In fervour of soul, and weeping walked therethrough
With sighs and cries to God of warm desire,
This heavenly virtue craving to obtain.
And, since God gladly hearkeneth the prayers
Of contrite hearts and lowly, as he prayed
There came a voice from heaven which called him
twice :
‘ Brother Masseo, Brother Masseo ! ’ Then
Knowing in spirit it was the voice of Christ,
‘ My Lord, my Lord ! ’ he answered : and Christ spake :
‘ What wilt thou give to have this grace of Me ? ’
And Brother Masseo answered : ‘ O my Lord,
I would e’en give the eyes from out my head.’
And Christ spake to him : ‘ I will thou have the grace,
And thine eyes also.’ And, this said, the voice
Vanished, and Brother Masseo there remained
Filled with such virtue of humility—
The grace he longed for—and the light of God,
That he was ever jubilant from that hour,
And oft, when praying, would shape his joy to sound
Like to a dove’s soft cooing, oo, oo, oo,

And with glad countenance and joyful heart
Remain in contemplation : and therewith,
Being most humble grown, he deemed himself
The least of all men in the world. And when
By Brother James of Fallerone asked
Wherefore his joyful tune he never changed,
Full blithely he replied that whoso found
All good in one thing needed not to change
His tune.

Unto the praise of God. Amen.

XXXII

HOW SAINT CLARE BLEST THE LOAVES

SAINT CLARE, devoted follower of Christ's Cross,
And of Saint Francis a renownèd plant,
Was of such sanctity, that not alone
Bishops and Cardinals, but the Pope himself
Right earnestly desired to see and hear,
And oft in person went to visit, her.
And one time, among other times, he came
Unto the Convent, for to hear her speak
Of heavenly things divine: and, being thus
Together met in holy communing,
Saint Clare meanwhile bade ready spread the board,
And set the bread thereon, that it might be
Blest of the Holy Father. Wherefore now,
Soon as their ghostly talk had end, Saint Clare
On bended knee, with utmost reverence,
Besought that it might please him bless the bread
Set thus upon the table. Whereunto
Replied the Holy Father: 'Sister Clare,
Most faithful daughter, I desire that thou
Do bless this bread, and make thereon the sign
Of the Cross of God, whereto thou'rt wholly given.'
'Pardon, Most Holy Father,' quoth Saint Clare,
'For well were I deserving utmost blame,
Who but a worthless woman am, should I

In presence of God's Vicar, dare pronounce
Such blessing.' And the Pope replied: 'That this
Be not imputed to presumptuous thought,
But merit of Obedience, I command
By holy Obedience that upon these loaves
Thou make the said sign of the holy Cross,
And in God's name do bless them.' Thereupon
Saint Clare, as daughter of Obedience true,
Devoutly blessed the loaves, and made withal
The sign of the holy Cross. O wondrous thing !
Forthwith on all those loaves, right fair inwrought,
The sign o' the Cross appeared: then some thereof
Were eaten, some, the miracle to mark,
Put by. And when the Holy Father saw
That miracle, of the said bread he took,
And, rendering thanks to God, and from Saint Clare
With benediction parting, went his way.
At that time in the Convent, with Saint Clare,
Her mother Sister Ortolana dwelt,
And Sister Agnes, her own sister—both
Full of good works and of the Holy Ghost—
With many another saintly nun; to whom
Saint Francis sent sick persons not a few;
And, one and all, with prayers and with the sign
O' the Cross they healed them.

To Christ's praise. Amen.

XXXIII

HOW SAINT LOUIS WENT TO VISIT
BROTHER GILES

SAINT LOUIS, King of France, from shrine to shrine
Went through the world on pilgrimage, and when
He heard tell of the passing sanctity
Of Brother Giles, the which had been among
Saint Francis' first companions, he resolved
Wholly and set his heart to visit him
In person. Wherefore to Perugia,
Where Brother Giles then sojourned, forth he fared,
And, coming to the Brothers' Convent-door
As a poor unknown pilgrim, and with few
Companions, he inquired right urgently
For Brother Giles, nor told the porter aught
Of who it was inquired. The porter went
And said to Brother Giles that at the door
There was a pilgrim who inquired for him:
And lo ! it was revealed to him of God
In spirit to know it was the King of France:
Whereat on a sudden, with great ardour fired,
He issued from his cell, and ran to the door:
And without further questioning, albeit
Ne'er seen of one another, down they knelt
In great devotion, and, each clasping each,
Kissed as familiarly as they had been
Long-linked in utmost friendship: for all that,

No word spake one to other, but thus embraced
Continued, with these signs of tender love,
In silence. And when now for a great space
In the said manner they had so remained
Without word spoken, they parted each from each,
And forth Saint Louis upon his journey fared,
And Brother Giles returned him to his cell.
And when Saint Louis the King had gone his way,
A certain Brother of his companion asked
Who it had been that was so long time locked
In Brother Giles' embrace : and he replied
That it was Louis King of France had come
To look on Brother Giles. And when this word
He to the others told, sore vexed were they
That Brother Giles had said no word to him :
And, hereat murmuring, they bespake him thus :
‘ O Brother Giles, why wert thou such a churl
As unto king so excellent, who came
From France to look on thee, and from thy lips
Hear some good word, to say no word at all ? ’
Made answer Brother Giles : ‘ Brothers most dear,
Marvel not therefore, since nor I to him,
Nor he to me, had power to speak a word ;
For long as we were thus together clasped,
The light of heavenly wisdom revealed plain
His heart to me, and mine to him, and so
By divine operation gazing thus
Each into other’s heart, we better knew
What I to him, and he to me, would say,
Than if by word of mouth we had uttered it,

Yea, and with greater solace, than if that,
Which in our heart we felt, we had in word
Unfolded, through default of human speech
Which may not the hid mysteries of God
Shew clearly forth, and would have wrought in us
Rather discomfort than encouragement.
Wherefore with wondrous solace, wot ye well,
The king departed.'

To Christ's praise. Amen.

XXXIV

HOW SAINT CLARE WAS MIRACULOUSLY CARRIED OF ANGELS TO THE CHURCH OF SAINT FRANCIS

SAINT CLARE was on a time so grievous sick
That to the church she might by no means win
To say the Office with the other Nuns :
And when the feast o' the birth of Christ was toward,
And all the Sisters else to Matins hied,
She remained sole abed, and ill-content
That with the rest she might not win to share
That ghostly solace. But Jesu Christ, her spouse,
Loth that she thus be left disconsolate,
Made her miraculously to be borne
Of Angels to Saint Francis' church, and there
At Matin-Office and at midnight-Mass
Be present to the close, and, more than this,
Receive the blest Communion, and anon
Caused her be carried to her couch again.
And when unto Saint Clare the Nuns returned,
The Holy Office at Saint Damian's done,
They said to her : ' O Mother, Sister Clare,
What wondrous consolation hath been ours
On this, Christ's holy birth-night ! Would to God
He had vouchsafed thee to be there with us ! '
Whereto Saint Clare made answer : ' Praise and thanks
Unto my Lord the blessed Jesu Christ,

Sisters and daughters mine most dear, I give,
For that with utmost solace to my soul
I have had part in each solemnity
Of this most holy night, and greater things
Than ye had part in, through my Father's aid,
Saint Francis, and the grace of God ; for I
In holy Father Francis' church have been,
And with mine own ears, both of body and mind,
Have all the singing heard, and eke the sound
Of organs therein made, and have myself
Received the blest Communion. Then rejoice
For this high favour done to me, and give
Thanks unto Jesu Christ our Lord.' Amen.

XXXV

HOW BROTHER LEO HAD A VISION,
WHICH WAS INTERPRETED BY
SAINT FRANCIS

WHENAS Saint Francis once lay grievous sick,
And Brother Leo was serving him, behold !
The aforesaid Brother Leo, being at prayer
Nigh to Saint Francis, from himself was rapt
In Jesu Christ, and borne in spirit away
To a mighty river, headlong-swift, and wide.
And, standing to behold who passed, he saw
Some certain Brothers, with burdens on their backs,
Enter that river, the which were suddenly
Down-beaten by the force o' the flood, and drowned :
Others there were who won a third part o'er,
Some e'en to midmost of the stream, and some
Well nigh to the other side : who, one and all,
Through the flood's force, and bearing on their backs
Those burdens, were at last o'erthrown and drowned.
And Brother Leo had mighty ruth for them,
Beholding : and on a sudden, as he stood thus,
Lo ! a great multitude of Brothers came,
Without one burden or any weight, in whom
Shone forth the light of holy poverty.
These, entering, without peril passed the flood :
And Brother Leo, having all beheld,
Came to himself. Saint Francis hereupon

Perceiving in spirit that Brother Leo had seen
A vision, called him to his side and asked
What he had seen : to whom when point by point
This Brother Leo had told the vision o'er,
Saint Francis said : ' That thou hast seen is true,
The mighty river is this world : therewithal
The Brothers drowned in the river, these are they
Their gospel-vows who followed not, in chief
As touching deepest poverty : but they,
Who without peril crossed, those Brothers are
The which no earthly and no carnal thing
Sought or possessed in this world, but, of food
And raiment having merely the bare mean,
Follow Christ naked on the Cross, and are
Contented ; and the burden and sweet yoke
Of Christ and holy Obedience these do bear
Willing and fain, and from the body's life
Win hence an easy passage unto life
Eternal.'

To the praise of God. Amen.

XXXVI

HOW A RICH AND COURTEOUS
KNIGHT ENTERTAINED SAINT
FRANCIS, AND AFTERWARDS
JOINED THE ORDER

SAINT FRANCIS, thrall of God, coming one eve
Late to the house of a great nobleman
And mighty, was received and lodged of him,
Both he and his companion, as they had been
Angels of Paradise, with uttermost
Of courtesy and devotion : for which cause
Saint Francis mightily set his love upon him,
Seeing that as they passed within the house
He had embraced them, and full friendly kissed,
And then had washed, and wiped, and kissed their feet
Humbly, and kindled a great fire, and made
Ready the board with divers goodly meats,
And with glad countenance, the while he ate,
Served them unceasingly. Anon, when now
Saint Francis had with his companion supped,
Outspake this nobleman : ' Father, behold !
To you myself I offer, and of mine
What things soe'er ye need : and, need ye ever
Tunic, or cloak, or any single thing,
Buy it, and I will pay you ; and take note
That ready am I to furnish all your needs,
Since by God's grace I can ; for I abound

In every earthly blessing ; therefore too,
For love of God who gave me them, right fain
Am I to benefit His poor.' Whereat
Saint Francis, seeing his so great courtesy
And kindness, and large offerings, did conceive
Such love for the man, that, when he parted thence,
He strode along, to his companion saying :
' This nobleman would of a surety be
Good for our fellowship, who is toward God
Of gratitude so mindful, and so kind
And courteous to his neighbour and the poor.
Know, Brother mine most dear, that courtesy
Is of God's attributes, who sun and shower
To just and unjust courteously doth give :
Yea, courtesy is sister's self indeed
To charity, which keepeth love alive
And quencheth hate. And seeing that I have marked
In this good man a virtue so divine,
Him would I gladly for companion have :
I will then we one day return to him,
If haply God may touch his heart to wish
Go with us in God's service : and meanwhile
Pray we that God may plant within his soul
The said desire, and give him grace withal
To bring it to effect.' O wondrous thing !
Within few days after Saint Francis' prayer,
Into the heart of the said nobleman.
God sent the said desire, and therewithal
Saint Francis spake to his companion, saying :
' Hie we, my Brother, to yon courteous man,

For certain hope have I in God that he,
Being so courteous touching things of time,
Will yield himself unto our company.'
So forth they went, and to his house drew near.
Then to his fellow thus Saint Francis spake :
' Abide we here a little, for I would first
Pray God to make our journey prosperous,
And that this noble prey, the which we think
To pluck from the world, poor weaklings that we be,
He may vouchsafe to yield us through the worth
Of His most holy passion.' And, this said,
He fell to praying in a place from whence
By the said courteous man he might be seen.
Whereat, as God willed, the said nobleman.
Looking to this side and to that, beheld
Saint Francis in devoutest prayer to God,
Who with a great light, as he prayed, appeared
And stood before him ; and, God standing thus,
He saw Saint Francis a good space from earth
Raised bodily ; by the which he was so touched,
Inspired of God to leave the world behind,
That from his palace he straight gat him forth,
And to Saint Francis ran in fervour of soul,
And coming to him thus in act of prayer
Kneeled at his feet, and with great earnestness
Prayed him devoutly with himself vouchsafe
Receive him to do penance. Whereupon
Saint Francis, seeing his prayer was heard of God,
And that this nobleman right urgently
Asked that himself desired, anon uprose

In fervour and joy of spirit, and embraced
And kissed him, with devoutest thanks to God,
The which had added to his company
A Knight so perfect. And this nobleman
Said to Saint Francis : ' What dost bid me do,
My Father ? here am I at thy behest
Ready to give my substance to the poor,
And follow Christ with thee, untrammelled thus
Of all things earthly.' And e'en so he did ;
For, by Saint Francis' counsel and command,
Distributing all his goods among the poor,
He came within the Order, and lived on
In utmost penitence, sanctity of life,
And holy conversation, and at length
Life ended, to the glory of the blest
Departed.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XXXVII

HOW IT WAS REVEALED TO SAINT
FRANCIS THAT BROTHER ELIAS
WAS DAMNED, AND THE SEQUEL
THEREOF

WHENAS Saint Francis in the selfsame House
With Brother Elias sojourned on a time,
It was of God unto Saint Francis shewn
That damned was Brother Elias, and that he
Would from the Order fall away, and die
At last outside the Order : for which cause
Saint Francis such mislike for him conceived,
That he nor spake nor talked with him ; and, if
E'er chanced that Brother Elias toward him drew,
He turned aside, and went some other way,
Thereby to 'scape the encounter ; in such wise
That Brother Elias 'gan perceive and know
Saint Francis had mislike for him ; whereof
Wishing to learn the reason, he one day
Approached Saint Francis, for to speak with him ;
And when Saint Francis would have shunned him, he
Held him perforce in courteous wise, and 'gan
Discreetly pray him to make known the cause
Why he so shunned his speech and company.
Saint Francis answered him : ' The cause is this,
That God hath shewn me how that for thy sins
Thou wilt from the Order fall away, and die

Outside the Order ; this too hath God shewn,
That thou art damned.' Made answer, hearing it,
Brother Elias : ' Reverend Father mine,
Prithee for God's love shun me not for this,
Nor drive me from thee, but as shepherd good
And as God's scholar, seek and save the sheep,
Which, an thou help not, perisheth ; and, if
It may be, beseech God for me revoke
The doom of my damnation ; for one finds
It written that God doth let revoke His doom,
So mend his sin the sinner : and in thy prayers
Such faith is mine, that were I in mid-hell,
And thou mad'st prayer to God for me, I should
Some comfort feel ; wherefore, again I pray,
Commend me, sinful as I am, to God,
Who came for to save sinners, that He may
Receive me to His mercy.' Thus with tears
And deep devotion Brother Elias spake :
Whereat Saint Francis, with a father's ruth,
Promised to pray God for him, and so did.
And, full devoutly praying for him to God,
He knew by revelation that his prayer
Was heard of God, and Brother Elias' doom,
As touching his damnation, done away,
Nor would his soul be damned at last ; nathless
That from the Order he full sure would go,
And die outside the Order ; which so came
To pass : for Frederick, King of Sicily,
Against the Church rebelling, and of the Pope
Being excommunicate, with whosoe'er

Had lent him aid or counsel, it befell
That the said Brother Elias, who was deemed
One of the wisest of earth's folk, at suit
Of the said King Frederick, to his party clave,
And so became a rebel against the Church,
And recreant to his Order ; for which cause
He by the Pope was excommunicate,
And of the habit of Saint Francis reft.
And, being thus excommunicate, he fell
Sore sick ; and a lay Brother, who had stayed
Within the Order, and was a man of good
And holy conversation, having heard
Of the said sickness, came to visit him,
And, among other things, bespake him thus :
‘Sorely it grieves me, Brother mine most dear,
That thou, being excommunicate and thrust
Forth from the Order, in this plight should’st die :
But, an some mode or means thou seest, by which
To pluck thee from this peril, every toil
Will I bear gladly.’ Brother Elias said :
‘No means see I, my Brother, save this alone,
That to the Pope thou hie thee, and for love
Of God, and of Saint Francis, thrall of God,
By whose admonishment I left the world,
Pray him absolve me from the Church’s ban,
The holy garb restore me.’ Willingly
The Brother said would he that toil bestow
For his salvation, so took leave of him,
And hied him to the Holy Father’s feet,
Praying him humbly grant his Brother grace

For God's love and Saint Francis'. And the Pope,
As God willed, suffered him return, and eke,
If Brother Elias yet alive he found,
On his behalf absolve him, and give back
The habit. Whereat, right gladly setting forth,
To Brother Elias he returned full fast,
And living found him, but at point to die,
So from the ban absolved, and to the garb
Restored him : and, from this life passing forth,
Through merit of Saint Francis and his prayers,
Wherein of old he had such mighty hope,
The soul of Brother Elias earned the wage
Of mercy.

To the praise of God. Amen.

XXXVIII

HOW SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA
SO PREACHED THAT HE SEEMED
TO MEN OF DIVERS NATIONS TO
BE SPEAKING IN THEIR OWN
TONGUE

THAT wondrous vessel of the Holy Ghost,
 Saint Anthony of Padua, being one
 Of these disciples and companions erst
 Called of Saint Francis, whom Saint Francis wont
 To name his bishop, in the Consistory
 Once preached before the Pope and Cardinals ;
 In which Consistory were gathered men
 Of divers nations, to wit, Latins, Greeks,
 French, Germans, English, Slavs, and other tongues
 O' the world a many ; and, by the Holy Ghost
 Enkindled, with such subtlety and power,
 So clearly and devoutly set he forth
 God's Word, and with such learning, that all they
 Of the Consistory, though of divers tongues,
 Distinctly understood him, word by word,
 As if in their own several tongues he spake.
 Whereat were all astonished, for seemed to them
 Here wrought afresh that old-world miracle
 Of the Apostles on day of Pentecost,
 Who by the Holy Spirit's power did speak
 In every tongue : and marvelling they said

One to another: 'Is not he of Spain,
Who preacheth ? How, then, hear we from his lips
Of all our lands the language ?' And the Pope,
Likewise in wonder pondering on the depth
Of that he spake, said: 'Verily this man
Is Ark of the Testament, and armoury
Of Holy Scripture.'

To God's praise. Amen.

XXXIX

HOW SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA
PREACHED TO THE FISHES

THE blessed Christ, willing to shew how great
The holiness of His most faithful thrall
Saint Anthony of Padua, and how
His preaching and pure doctrine even of beasts,
That lack discourse of reason, might be heard
Devoutly, by the fishes did reprove
Once among other times the foolishness
Of infidels and heretics, as erst
In the Old Testament by an ass's mouth
The witlessness of Balaam He reproved.
Saint Anthony then, being on a time
At Rimini, where was a great multitude
Of heretics, to the light of the true faith
Wishing to lead them, and the way of truth,
Preached and disputed with them mightily
Of Holy Scripture and the faith of Christ:
But they not only heeded not his words,
But even, as men stiff-necked and obdurate,
Would not so much as hear him. Whence befell
By divine inspiration on a day
Saint Anthony gat him to a river's mouth
Hard by the sea, and there upon the bank
Took stand 'twixt sea and river, and in God's name,
As doth a preacher, to the fish 'gan speak:

‘ Hear ye the word of God, ye fish of sea
And river, since unbelieving heretics
Will none of it.’ Scarce had he spoke the word,
When up the sea-bank suddenly came to him
So large a multitude of fish, great, small,
Or midway-fashioned, that in all that sea,
And in that river, was ne’er the like beheld
For multitude ; and all upreared their heads
From out the water, and attentive stayed
In utter stillness, tame, and orderly :
For first and nearest to the margin stood
The lesser fish, then those ’twixt large and small,
And hindmost, where more deep the water was,
Those that were greater. And when thus the fish
Were in due order ranged, Saint Anthony
On this wise solemnly ’gan preach to them :
‘ O fish, my brothers, behoden are ye much
To render thanks, so far as ye have skill,
To our Creator, who hath given to you
So noble an element wherein to dwell,
That ye have choice of salty wave or sweet,
As liketh you ; and many a hiding-place
To shun the tempest hath He given withal,
And a transparent element and clear,
And food to live by : courteous and benign
Is God your Maker, who created you,
And, bidding you increase and multiply,
Gave you His blessing : afterward when came
The general flood, and all the beasts were dying,
You only did God scathless keep. And next,

That ye might dart at pleasure to and fro,
Fins hath He given you. Unto you the grace,
By God's command was granted, to preserve
The Prophet Jonah, and after the third day
To cast him up on shore alive and whole.
Ye for your Lord, Christ Jesu, did provide
The tribute-money, which He, as a poor man,
Had not wherewith to pay. Ye were the food
Of Jesu Christ, the eternal King, before
He rose, and after, by a wondrous mystery :
For all which things behoden are ye much
To give God praise and blessing, who on you
More than on other creatures hath bestowed
His benefits.' At these and the like words,
And admonitions of Saint Anthony,
The fish began to ope their mouths, and bow
Their heads down, and with these and other signs
Of reverence, to the utmost of their power,
Give praise to God. Whereat Saint Anthony,
Seeing such reverence by the fishes given
To their Creator, God, waxed glad of soul,
And in a loud voice said : ' Blessed be God
Eternal, since the fish more honour Him
Than human heretics, and better heed
Give creatures that lack reason to His word
Than men-folk who believe not.' And the more
Saint Anthony did preach, the greater grew
The multitude of fishes, and of these
None from the place, that he had taken, stirred.
Unto this miracle the city-folk

'Gan hie them ; and of those who thither drew
Were numbered e'en the aforesaid heretics ;
Who, seeing a miracle so marvellous,
Not to be gainsaid, pricked at heart, did all
Down-cast them at his feet, to hear the word
Spoke by Saint Anthony. And Saint Anthony
Touching the Catholic faith 'gan preach to them,
And preached so nobly that those heretics
He one and all converted, turning them
To the true faith of Christ : and all, who erst
Were faithful, in great joyfulness abode
Solaced, and strengthened in their holy faith.
Then, bidding the fish go, Saint Anthony
Gave them God's blessing ; and all went their way
With marvellous signs of gladness, and likewise
The people. Afterward Saint Anthony
Abode in Rimini for many days,
Preaching and reaping of the souls of men
Much ghostly harvest.

To the praise of Christ.

XL

HOW BROTHER SIMON FREED FROM
TEMPTATION A CERTAIN NOVICE
OF SAN SEVERINO

ABOUT the time when first the Order sprang,
In the lifetime of Saint Francis, it befell
There came to the Order an Assisan youth,
Hight Brother Simon, the which was of God
Adorned and dowered with such surpassing grace
And meditative holiness of mind,
That his whole life a mirror was indeed
Of sanctity, as I have heard from those
Who were long with him. Right seldom was he seen
Outside his cell, and, if at any time
Found with the Brothers, would still speak of God.
Ne'er was he schooled in grammar ; and nathless
His talk of God and eke of prayer to Christ
Was so profound and lofty, that his words
Seemed supernatural words ; whence, having gone
Into the wood one eve with Brother James
Of Massa for to speak of God, the while
In sweetest wise of love divine he spake,
They in their parley did outwatch the night ;
Yet in the morning seemed they to have been
No more than time the briefest, as to me
The aforesaid Brother James recounted it.
Now the said Brother Simon did receive

Such joy and sweetness of the Holy Ghost
From these divine illuminings of God
And rapturous visitations, that full oft,
Ware of their coming, he laid him on his bed,
Since that sweet calm, the Holy Spirit wrought,
Required of him not only rest of soul,
But even of body ; and in such visitings
From heaven he was oft rapt in God, and grew
Wholly insensible to things of time.
Once therefore, being on this wise rapt in God,
And to the world insensible, he burned
Inward with love divine, and from without
Felt naught with the bodily senses. And hereof
A Brother, desiring to have proof and see
If, as it seemed, this were so, went and took
A live coal from the hearth, and planted it
On his bare foot. And Brother Simon felt
Naught, and no mark upon his foot it left,
Albeit a great while it had there remained,
Till of itself it had consumed itself.
Now the said Brother Simon, when at board
He sat him down, ere bodily food he took,
Took and dispensed food ghostly, holding speech
Of God the while. By the which holy talk
A youth of San Severino he one time
Converted, who in laic life had been
A youth most vain and worldly, and by birth
Noble, and very delicate of frame.
And Brother Simon, taking the said youth
Into the Order, did his secular clothes

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Departed, and no more from that time forth
Were seen or heard in all the country round.
And the said miracle was plain to all
The Ward of Fermo, where was situate
That Convent.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XLI

CONCERNING BROTHER CONRAD OF
OFFIDA AND OTHERS

THE Province of Ancona's March of old
 Was, as with stars the firmament, adorned
 With holy Brothers, who, like luminaries
 Of heaven, enkindled and made glorious
 The Order of Saint Francis and the world
 By precept and ensample. Among the rest
 Was Brother Lucido Antico first,
 In very sooth a light of sanctity,
 Burning with love divine ; whose glorious tongue,
 Taught by the Holy Ghost, gat wondrous fruit
 Of preaching : and Brother Bentivoglia next,
 Of San Severino, who was sometime seen
 By Brother Masseo of Severino raised
 In air a mighty space, within the wood
 While praying : through which miracle the said
 Brother Masseo, then a parish-priest,
 Was moved to quit his parish, and became
 A Minor Brother, and of such sanctity
 That he wrought many miracles, in life
 And after ; and his body at Murro rests.
 The aforesaid Brother Bentivoglia dwelt
 At Trave Bonanti on a time, alone,
 To tend and keep a leper ; and having charge
 From his Superior to part thence and go

To another place some fifteen miles away,
Loth to forsake that leper, with mighty love
Kindled, he took and on his shoulders set
And bare him all that journey of fifteen miles
'Twixt dawn and sunrise to the aforesaid place
Whereto he had been sent, that is of men
Named Monte Saracino : o'er which space,
Had he an eagle been, in so small time
Have flown he could not : and at so supreme
A miracle great wonder and amaze
Filled all that countryside. . Another yet
Was Brother Peter of Monticello, who
Was once by Brother Servodeo seen,
Him of Urbino—then his Guardian
I' the old House of Ancona—raised from earth
Five or six cubits bodily, and borne
To the feet o' the Crucified within the church,
Where he was praying. This Brother Peter, once
Keeping Saint Michael the Archangel's fast
With deep devotion, on the fortieth day,
Last of that fast, was in the church at prayer,
When by a youthful Brother to that end
'Neath the High Altar hiding, for to spy
Some token of his sanctity, he was heard
With Michael the Archangel communing ;
And these the words they spake : Saint Michael said :
' Faithfully, Peter, hast thou toiled for me,
And vexed thy body in many ways : behold !
I am come to comfort thee, and eke for this,
That thou mayst ask what grace soe'er thou wilt,

The which from God I will obtain for thee.'
And Brother Peter answered him and said :
' Most holy Prince of the celestial host,
Loyallest zealot of God's honour, thou
Who art of souls protector pitiful,
This is the grace I ask, that thou of God
Obtain for me the pardon of my sins.'

Replied Saint Michael : ' Ask some other grace,
Since this shall I obtain full easily ' :
And Brother Peter asking naught beside,
The Archangel ended : ' For the faith devout
The which thou hast in me, I will procure
The grace thou askest, and much more to boot.'

And, done their parley, which full long endured,
The Archangel Michael parted from his side,
Leaving him comforted exceedingly.

Now in this holy Brother Peter's time
Lived Brother Conrad of Offida too ;
And at Ferrano in the selfsame House
Dwelling, within Ancona's territory,
The aforesaid Brother Conrad went one day
Into the wood to meditate on God,
And Brother Peter followed secretly
Behind him, for to see what should befall :
And Brother Conrad 'gan to pray, and full
Devoutly, with strong crying, did implore
Mary the Virgin of her blessed Son
To win for him this grace, that he might feel
A little of that sweetness which of old
Was by Saint Simeon felt upon the day

Of purification, when he bare in his arms
Christ Jesu, Saviour blest. And, the said prayer
Ended, Maid Mary, ever pitiful,
Heard him. And lo ! the Queen of heaven appeared,
Holding her little Son upon her arm,
In a great splendour of light, and, drawing near
To Brother Conrad, set the blessed babe
Upon his arm, the which did Him receive
With uttermost devoutness, and embraced,
And closely clasped, and in his bosom laid,
All melted and dissolved in love divine,
And solace of the soul ineffable.

And when Mary the Virgin went her way
From Brother Conrad, Brother Peter hied
Back to the House, not to be seen of him.
But soon as Brother Conrad gat him home
Joyful and gay, said Brother Peter to him :
‘ O heavenly one, great solace hast thou had ! ’
Quoth Brother Conrad : ‘ What is that thou sayst,
O Brother Peter ? how know’st thou of aught
That I have had ? ’ and Brother Peter said :
‘ Well know I, well I know, that, with her Son,
Mary the Virgin came to visit thee.’

Then Brother Conrad, who, being truly meek,
Touching God’s favours fain would secret be,
Prayed him tell no man ; and so deep the love
Thenceforth between them, that one heart and soul
They seemed to share, in everything. One time
The aforesaid Brother Conrad in the House
At Siruolo by his prayers set free

A woman by the devil possessed, and all
Night long did pray for her, but, being
Seen of her mother, fled away with dawn,
That by the people he might not be found
And honoured.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XLII

HOW BROTHER CONRAD RECLAIMED
A REFRAC TORY BROTHER

Now Brother Conrad of Offida, named
Aforesaid, touching gospel poverty
A wondrous zealot of Saint Francis' Rule,
Was so devout of life, and before God
Of so great merit, that the blessed Christ
With many miracles did honour him
In life and after: whereof one was this:
Being to Offida's Convent on a time
Come as a guest, the Brothers prayed of him
To admonish, for God's love and charity,
A youthful Brother in that House, the which
Did in such childish and unruly sort
So wildly bear him, that of old and young
He in that Brotherhood disturbance wrought;
While of the sacred office, and what else
The Rule prescribed, little or naught recked he.
Whence Brother Conrad, with compassion moved
For the said youth, and at the Brothers' prayer,
Called him apart, and with such fervent love
Spake to him in devout admonishment
Words so effectual that, God's grace to aid,
He of a sudden from a child became
Old in his ways, and so obedient, kind,
Devout and diligent, peaceable withal

And lowly, and for every virtuous thing
Eager, that as the whole House was erewhile
By him disquieted, so were all men now
Cheered and well pleased, and loved him mightily.
Now, as God's pleasure was, it came to pass
That, after his conversion some few days,
Died the said youth, whereat right sorely grieved
The Brothers ; and a few days after death
His spirit to Brother Conrad did appear,
As at the altar he devoutly prayed
Of the said Convent, and full reverently
Saluted him as Father ; whereupon
Asked Brother Conrad : ' Who art thou ? ' Quoth
he :

' I am the soul of that young Brother who died
Some days agone.' And Brother Conrad said :
' O dearest Son, how is it with thee ? ' And he
Replied : ' My dearest Father, by God's grace,
And through thy teaching, it is thus far well,
That damned I am not ; nathless for my sins,
The which I had not time to cleanse enow,
I suffer shrewdest pains of Purgatory.
But prithee, Father, even as in thy ruth
Thou succouredst me, yet living, so too now
May it please thee succour me in these my pains,
By saying a Paternoster certain times,
Since in God's sight right welcome are thy prayers.'
Then Brother Conrad kindly to his suit
Consenting, having said one Paternoster
And Requiem æternam, quoth that soul :

‘ O dearest Father, what great good, and what Refreshment do I feel ! I pray thee now Say it once more ’ : and Brother Conrad said it ; And after he had said it, quoth the soul : ‘ Know, holy Father, when thou prayest for me, Allayed is all my suffering ; wherefore I Beseech thee cease not thus for me to pray.’ Then Brother Conrad, seeing by these his prayers That soul so holpen, said a hundred times The Paternoster for him ; and, this done, ‘ I thank thee, dearest Father,’ quoth the soul, ‘ In God’s name, for the love which thou hast borne To-me-ward ; seeing that through thy prayers from all My pains am I delivered, and go my way To the celestial Kingdom ’ : and this said, The soul departed. Then to their great joy Did Brother Conrad cheer the Brothers’ hearts, And all in order told that vision o’er.
Unto the blessed Christ His praise. Amen.

XLIII

CONCERNING THE VISION VOUCH-
SAFED TO BROTHER PETER

WHAT time together in Ancona's Ward,
 Forano's Convent, the said Brothers dwelt,
 Conrad and Peter—of the March Province
 Two shining stars that were, two men of heaven—
 Seeing that between them was such mighty love
 And charity, that one single heart, one soul,
 Seemed in the twain, they bound them by this pact
 That every solace by God's grace vouchsafed
 Each unto other should in love make known :
 Which pact so made betwixt them, it befell
 One day that, Brother Peter being at prayer,
 Devoutly of Christ's Passion pondering,
 And how the blessed Mother of Christ, and John
 His best-beloved disciple, and withal
 Saint Francis, were at foot o' the Cross portrayed,
 Through sorrow of spirit crucified with Christ,
 There fell a longing on his heart to know
 Which for Christ's Passion had the mightiest grief
 Of all those three—the Mother who Him bare,
 Or the disciple on His breast who slept,
 Or he that had with Christ been crucified,
 Saint Francis. Thus devoutly pondering,
 Mary the Virgin to his eyes appeared,
 And at her side Saint John the Evangelist,

And eke Saint Francis, clad in glorious robes
Of beatific lustre ; but the weed
Saint Francis wore seemed fairer than Saint John's.
And Brother Peter being sore afeard
At the said vision, Saint John heartened him,
Saying: ' Fear not, dear Brother, for we are come
To comfort thee, and clear thee of thy doubt.
Know therefore that the Mother of Christ and I
Beyond all creatures for Christ's Passion grieve,
And, after us, Saint Francis more than any,
Whom therefore in such glory now thou seest.'
And Brother Peter did inquire of him :
' Most holy Apostle of Christ, say for what cause
The raiment of Saint Francis doth appear
More beauteous than thine own.' Replied Saint John :
' This is the reason, that while in the world
He viler raiment bare on back than I.'
And when these words he had uttered, lo ! Saint John
To Brother Peter gave a glorious robe,
The which in hand he bare, and said to him :
' Take thou this robe which I have hither brought
To give thee' : and, as in the said robe Saint John
Was fain to array him, Brother Peter fell
To earth astonished, and 'gan cry aloud :
' O Brother Conrad, Brother Conrad dear,
Come hither quickly and help me, come and see
Things marvellous ! ' And, as he spake the word,
The holy vision vanished. Afterward,
When Brother Conrad came, he told him all
In order ; and they gave thanks to God. Amen.

XLIV

OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JOHN
OF LA PENNA

He of La Penna, Brother John, as yet
Being a lad and laic, unto him
In the March Province did one night appear
A marvellous fair boy, who called him, saying :
‘ John, hie thee to Saint Stephen’s, where doth preach
One of my Minor Brothers, and believe
His doctrine thou, and to his words give ear,
Since I have sent him thither : and, this done,
Lo ! a long journey thou hast yet to make,
And afterward shalt come to me.’ Thereat
He tarried not an instant, but uprose,
And in his spirit felt a mighty change.
And, coming to Saint Stephen’s, he found there
Great multitude of men and women set
To hear the preaching. He that was to preach
A Brother was named Philip, and one of those
First Brethren to Ancona’s March who came ;
And in the March as yet were Houses few.
Upstood this Brother Philip then to preach,
And full devoutly preached he, not with words
Of human wit, but in the power of Christ
And of His spirit, heralding the realm
Of life eternal. And, the preaching done,
To the said Brother Philip the lad went,

And said to him : ' O Father, an thou list
Receive me to the Order, fain would I
Do penance, and serve Jesu Christ our Lord.'
And Brother Philip, perceiving in the lad
A marvellous innocence and ready will
To do God service, said : ' On such a day
To me at Ricanati shalt thou come,
And I will cause receive thee ' : for 'twas there
The Chapter of the Province should be held :
Whereby the lad, who was most pure of heart,
Deemed this was that long journey he must make,
Even as the vision had foretold to him,
And, after, go to Paradise : and thus
He thought to do forthwith, when he should be
Received into the Order. So he went
And was received. And seeing at that time
The things he thought fulfilled not, and when now
The Minister in Chapter said : ' Whoe'er
Into the Province of Provence would go
Should have free licence,' a great longing fell
On him to go there, thinking in his heart
That this was that long journey he must make,
Before he came to Paradise : but since
He shamed to say it, confiding at the last
In the aforesaid Philip, who had caused
Receive him to the Order, tenderly
He prayed the same this grace for him obtain—
Into the Province of Provence to go.
Then Brother Philip, seeing his purity
And inward purpose, did that grace obtain :

Whereat with mighty gladness Brother John
Set forth to go, having this thought for sure,
That, the said journey ended, he should come
To Paradise. But, as God's pleasure was,
Within the aforesaid Province he remained
In this same expectation and desire
Five years and twenty, shewing forth the while
A life-ensample of pure holiness,
Ever in virtue growing, and in grace
With God and with the people : mightily
Alike of Brethren and of lay-folk loved.
And one day Brother John devoutly praying
With tears and lamentations for the hope
As yet fulfilled not, and life's pilgrimage
Too long continued, to his eyes appeared
The Christ, the blessed One, at sight of whom
His whole soul waxed as water, and anon
Christ thus bespake him : ' Brother John, my son,
Ask that thou wilt of Me ' : he answered : ' Lord,
I know not what to ask Thee, save Thyself,
Since naught beside do I desire : but this
Alone I pray Thee, pardon Thou my sins,
And grant me grace to see Thee yet again,
Whenas my need is greater.' Said the Christ :
' Thy prayer is heard,' and, having said, was gone,
And Brother John remained with solace filled
And heartened. Now the Brethen of the March,
Hearing the fame of his great sanctity,
Wrought on the General so that to the March
He sent him an Obedience to return ;

Receiving which Obedience he with joy
Set forward, thinking that, this journey done,
According to the promise of the Christ,
He needs must go to heaven. But, having thus
Back to the Province of the March returned,
For thirty years he lived there, nor was known
To any of his kin, and day by day
He waited on God's pity to redeem
His promise. And meanwhile full many a time
Right prudently the Guardianship he held ;
And God by him wrought many miracles.
And, among other gifts he had from God,
He had the spirit of prophecy ; for once—
He from the House gone forth upon a time—
One of his Novices, by the Devil assailed,
So sore was tempted, that, at last thereto
Consenting, he took counsel with himself,
So soon as Brother John should have returned,
To quit the Order : which thing Brother John
Knowing—both his temptation and intent—
By spirit of prophecy, anon came home,
And summoned the said Novice to himself,
And bade him make confession : but, before
Confession might be made, he told him all
In order his temptation, as by God
Revealed to him, and ended thus : ' My son,
Since thou didst wait for me, nor wouldest depart
Without my benediction, God this grace
To thee hath given, that never shalt thou quit
This Order, but shalt in the Order die,

With grace divine upon thee.' Therewithal
Was the said Novice strengthened in goodwill,
And stayed within the Order, and became
A holy Brother: and these things were all
By Brother Ugolino told to me.

Now the said Brother John, who was a man
Of cheerful and calm mind, and seldom spake,
Was to much prayer and deep devotion prone;
And, chiefly, after Matins slept he ne'er
Nor to his cell returned, but in the church
Stayed praying till dawn: and, Matins o'er one night,
As he continued praying, appeared to him
God's Angel and bespake him: 'Brother John,
Now is thy journey ended, for the which
Thou hast long time been waiting; wherefore I
Bring word to thee from God that thou demand
What grace thou wilt of Him; and I bring word
That thou choose, further, whether of these thou
wilt—

One day in Purgatory, or seven days' pain
In this world.' And, in this world Brother John
Choosing the seven days' pain, anon fell sick
Of divers maladies; for fever sore
Gat hold of him, and gout in hands and feet,
And pain in the side, and many another ill;
But what worse tortured him was that a fiend
Still stood before him, holding in his hand
A mighty scroll, with all the sins inscribed
That he had ever wrought, who said to him:
'For these transgressions, or of heart, or tongue,

Or else in act accomplished, thou art damned
Even to the depths of hell.' And naught of good
Could he remember ever done by him,
Or in the Order, or when-else-soe'er,
But thought within his heart that he was damned,
Even as the fiend had told him. So, when asked
By any how he fared, he answered : ' Ill,
For I am damned.' The Brothers, seeing this,
Marvelled, and for an agèd Brother, hight
Matthew of Monte Rubbiano, sent—
A holy man, fast friend to Brother John.
And the said Brother Matthew, coming thus
Upon the seventh day of his distress,
Saluted him, and asked him how he fared ;
And he made answer that he fared but ill,
For he was damned. Then Brother Matthew said :
' Rememberest not how thou hast many a time
Confessed to me, and I of all thy sins
Have utterly assoiled thee ? And again
Dost not remember how thou hast served God
Within this holy Order year by year
Continually ? And next rememberest not
How that God's mercy doth the whole world's sin
Surpass, and that our blessed Saviour Christ
For our redemption paid a priceless sum ?
Have then good hope that thou art surely saved.'
And with that word, the term of chastening past,
Fled the temptation, and the comfort came.
And with exceeding joy spake Brother John
To Brother Matthew : ' Since the hour is late,

And thou art weary, prithee go to rest':
And he was loth to leave him, but at length
Upon his strong entreaty went to rest,
And with the Brother who served him Brother John
Remained alone. And lo! the blessed Christ
Came in transcendent brightness, with a waft
Of marvellous sweet odour, even as He
Had promised to appear to him again,
Whenas his need was greater; and of all
His sicknesses He healed him utterly.
Then Brother John, with folded hands to God
Returning thanks, that with so good an end
He the long journey of this woful life
Had consummated, to the hands of Christ
Resigned his spirit, and gave it back to God,
From this life mortal to immortal life
Passing with Christ the blessed, whom so long
He had desired, and waited to behold.
And the said Brother John now rests within
The Convent of La Penna of Saint John
Aforesaid.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XLV

CONCERNING BROTHER HUMBLE
AND BROTHER PEACEABLE

WITHIN the aforesaid Province of the March,
After Saint Francis' death, were brothers twain
In the Order—the one Brother Humble hight,
And the other Brother Peaceable—the which
Were men right holy and perfect ; and hereof
One, to wit Brother Humble, lodged i' the House
Of Soffiano, and there died ; the other
Dwelt in a Convent far enow from him.
Now, as it pleased God, Brother Peaceable,
Being one day in a lone place at prayer,
Was rapt in ecstasy, and saw the soul
Of his brother, Brother Humble, the which then
Passed from the body, going straight to Heaven,
Without or let or hindrance. It befell
After long years this Brother Peaceable,
Who yet remained, was of the fellowship
In the said House of Soffiano made,
Wherein his brother had died. About that time,
Bruforte's lords requesting, they exchanged
The said House for another, whence befell,
'Mong sundry matters else, they bore away
The holy Brothers' relics, who had died
Within that House ; and coming to the grave

Of Brother Humble, Brother Peaceable
Took his own brother's bones, and in good wine
Washed them, and wrapped them in a napkin
white

And with great reverence and devotion kissed,
Weeping; whereat the others marvelled sore,
Deeming no good ensample set by him,
In that, a man of so great sanctity,
With carnal and with worldly love he seemed
To mourn his brother, and to his relics shew
More worship than to the others, who had been
No less than Brother Humble holy of life,
And their bones worthy reverence, even as his.
Then, knowing the Brothers' ill imaginings,
This Brother Peaceable in lowly wise
Did satisfy them, saying: 'Marvel not
Hereof, my dearest Brothers, that I have done
That to my brother's bones which to the rest
I did not; seeing that, blessed be His name,
God knoweth it was no carnal love hereto
Constrained me, as ye deem; but this I did
For that, from this life when my brother passed,
I, in a lone place praying, and far from him,
Beheld his soul ascending straight to heaven;
And therefore am I certified his bones
Are sacred, and should be in Paradise:
And, had God granted me such certainty
Touching the other Brethren, to their bones
I had done the selfsame reverence.' For which
cause,

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Seeing his holy and devout intent,
The brothers were right well edified, and gave
Praise unto God, who doeth to his saints
Such marvels.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XLVI

HOW TO A SICK BROTHER APPEARED
MARY THE VIRGIN, AND HEALED
HIM

IN the said House of Soffiano dwelt
Of old a Minor Brother, of so great grace
And sanctity of life that he appeared
Wholly divine, and oft was rapt in God.
This Brother being in God once all-absorbed
And upward lifted, seeing he had the grace
Of contemplation notably, to him
Came divers kinds of birds, that tamely perched
Upon his head and shoulders, arms and hands,
And sang in marvellous wise. He was a man
Full solitary, and seldom spake, but, when
Questioned of any matter, would reply
So graciously and wisely, that he seemed
To be an Angel rather than a man ;
Mighty in prayer and contemplation he,
And of the Brothers in high reverence held.
This brother of his virtuous life the course
Now ending, as God willed, fell sick to death,
So that of food he might no morsel take ;
And therewithal no medicine of the flesh
Would he receive ; but all his confidence
Was in the blest physician, Jesu Christ,
And in His blessed Mother, at whose hand

By divine goodness he earned grace to be
Visited mercifully and consoled.
Whence on a time, he lying on his bed
With all his heart to death disposing him
In uttermost devotion, to his eyes
Appeared the blessed Mother of Jesu Christ,
Mary the Maid, in glory, and with her
Of Angels and of holy maids a host
Innumerable and girt with marvellous light,
Who to his bed drew nigh : and, seeing her,
He took exceeding comfort and good cheer
Of soul alike and body, and 'gan to pray
Humbly that she would her belovèd Son
Beseech of His own merits to draw him forth
From out this prison-house of wretched flesh :
Continuing in which prayer with many tears
To him made answer calling him by name
Mary the Virgin, saying : ' Doubt not, my son,
For this thy prayer is heard, and I am come
To comfort thee a little, ere thou depart
From this life.' At the Virgin's side there stood
Three holy virgins, the which bare in hand
Three boxes of electuary, whose breath
Was passing sweet and fragrant. Thereupon
Mary the glorious Virgin took and oped
One of those boxes, so that all the house
Was with the odour filled ; and, with a spoon
Taking of that electuary, she gave
To the sick man thereof ; the which so soon
As the sick man had tasted, he 'gan feel

Such comfort and such sweetness, that it seemed
His soul within the body might not stay :
Whence he began in such-like words to speak :
' No more, O sweetest Mother of Jesu Christ,
Maid Mary blest, healer of human kind !
No more, blest mediciner, no more ! since I
Such sweetness can sustain not.' But the mild
And pitying Mother with that electuary
Served the sick man again and yet again,
Making him take it, till the box was void,
Then, void the first box, Mary Virgin blest,
Taking the second box, thrust in the spoon
To serve him with it, whereat he gently plained :
' Mother of God most beauteous, if my soul
Is, as it were, all molten by the breath
And sweetness of the first electuary,
How shall I bear the second ? Blessed one,
By all the saints and angels I thee pray
Vouchsafe no more to give me.' Answer made
Our Lady : ' Of this second box, my son,
Taste yet a little.' And, giving him thereof,
' To-day, my son, thou hast received,' she said,
' As much as may suffice thee : O my son,
Be comforted, since I will come for thee
Ere long, and bring thee to my own Son's realm,
Whom still thou'st sought and longed for ' : and,
this said,
Taking her leave of him, she went her way ;
And he remained so heartened and consoled
By that confection's sweetness, that he lived

Many days yet sustained and strong, though void
Of bodily food. And after certain days,
As with the Brothers joyfully he spake,
With great delight and gladness from this life
His soul departed.

To the praise of God.

XLVII

HOW A CERTAIN BROTHER WAS
ENTRANCED FOR THREE DAYS,
AND SAW A VISION OF WHAT
SHOULD AFTERWARD BEFALL
THE RULE OF SAINT FRANCIS

Now Brother James of Massa, to whom God
Opened the door of His hid mysteries,
And gave him perfectly of Holy Writ
And of things future to discern and know,
Was of such sanctity, that Brother Giles
Of Assisi, of Montino Brother Mark,
And Brothers Juniper and Lucido,
Said touching him that greater before God
None in the world they knew. This Brother James
Myself had great desire to see ; for when
Of Brother Giles' companion, Brother John,
I made request he would expound to me
Certain things spiritual, he answered thus :
‘Wouldst thou be taught the Spirit's way, seek
speech

With Brother James of Massa, for by him
E'en Brother Giles desired to be illumed,
And from his words may naught be ta'en away,
Nor thereto added ; seeing his mind hath probed
The hidden things of heaven, and his words are
The words of the Holy Spirit, and there lives

None upon earth whom I so much desired
To look upon as the said Brother James.'
He, at the outset of the ministry
Of Brother John, when praying once at Prime,
Was rapt in God, and for three days remained
In the said trance and ecstasy, the while,
All bodily sense suspended, he so void
Of sense continued, that the Brotherhood
Doubted if he were dead: and in that trance
Was shewn to him of God what things should be
And come to pass touching our holy Rule.
Which when I heard, the greater in me grew
My strong desire to see and speak with him.
And when God willed that my occasion came
To speak with him, I prayed him on this wise:
' If that be true which I have heard of thee,
Hold it not hid, I pray thee. I have heard,
What time thou didst remain three days as dead,
That, among other things, God shewed to thee
That which in this our Rule should come to pass;
And Brother Matthew, Minister of the March,
Gave me to know hereof, to whom thyself
Under Obedience didst declare the same.'

Then Brother James in deep humility
Confessed that Brother Matthew's words were true:
Which words—to wit what Brother Matthew said,
The Minister of the March—were like to these:
' I know a Brother, to whom God hath revealed
All that within our Rule shall come to pass;
For Brother James of Massa did unfold

In words to me, that, after many things
Touching the state of the Church Militant
Shewn him of God, he saw in vision a tree
Fair and full large, whereof the root was gold,
Whose fruits were men, and Minor Brothers, all,
And the main boughs in number ranged to match
The Provinces of the Order ; and each bough
The selfsame tale of Brothers did contain,
As did the Province by that bough designed.
He then of all the Brothers in the Rule,
As of each several Province, knew the sum,
And eke the names, the ages, and the states,
With their great offices and dignities,
Yea, and the graces and the faults of all.
And Brother John of Parma he beheld
Upon the summit of the midmost bough
Of the said tree ; and on the branches' tops,
That were around the midmost bough, were set
The Ministers of all the Provinces.
And, after this, Christ seated on a throne,
Vast and of dazzling whiteness, he beheld ;
And, calling to Saint Francis, the said Christ
Gave him a chalice full of life, and said,
As in his hand he placed it : “ Get thee hence,
Seek out thy Brothers, and give to them this cup
Of the spirit of life to drink of, for behold !
The spirit of Satan shall against them rise,
And strike full sore, and many of them shall fall,
Nor rise again.” And for companions, Christ
Unto Saint Francis did two Angels give.

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And afterward, soon as the storm had ceased,
Straight from this golden tree-root up there sprang
Another tree all golden, which brought forth
Leaves, flowers, and fruits, of gold. And of this
tree—

Its spreading breadth and depth, beauty and worth—
Now to hold silence, rather than to speak,
Were better.'

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

XLVIII

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO BROTHER
JOHN OF VERNIA

AMONG the other wise and holy Sons
And Brothers of Saint Francis—Sons that are
Their father's glory, as saith Solomon—
Lived in our time within the March Province
The venerable and holy Brother John
Of Fermo, who, long time as he abode
In the holy House of Vernia, where he passed
From this life, was called simply Brother John
Of Vernia : for he was indeed a man
Of matchless life and utmost sanctity.
This Brother John, while yet a lad and laic,
With all his heart the way of penitence,
That keepeth purity of body and soul,
Desired, and hence, though quite a little lad,
'Gan shirt of mail and iron girdle wear,
And do great abstinence ; and above all
When with the Canons of Saint Peter's Church
Of Fermo, who a life of splendour lived,
He sojourned, would shun bodily delights,
And starve the flesh with rigorous abstinence ;
But, having comrades sore opposed thereto,
The which did spoil him of his shirt of mail,
And baulked his abstinence in divers wise,

By God inspired, he thought to leave the world,
With all who loved it, and present himself
Whole to His arms Who hangs upon the Cross,
And in the habit of the crucified
Saint Francis ; and so did he. Being, then,
Received in the Order, thus a little lad,
And to the Novice-master's care consigned,
So spiritual and devout he grew, that oft,
Hearing his master speak of God, his heart
Would in him melt, as wax before the fire ;
And to such sweetness, through this love divine,
Of grace was he enkindled, that, to bide
Still and sustain such sweetness past his power,
He gat him up, and, as one drunken in soul,
Now to and fro the garden, now the wood,
Now through the church would run, where'er the fire
And force of the spirit drove him. Then, as time
Sped onward in its course, the grace of God
Made ever this angelic man to grow
From virtue unto virtue, and in gifts
Of heaven, and holy liftings of the soul,
And raptures ; that at times his mind was borne
Up to the splendours of the Cherubim,
Or to seraphic ardours, or the joys
Of blessed spirits, and at other time
To passionate-fond embracings of the Christ,
Not inward only felt in thrills of soul,
But eke by clear signs bodily from without :
And above all one time in marvellous wise
Kindled his heart the flame of love divine,

So that for three full years that flame endured ;
In the which time he wondrously received
Divine consolings and enlightenments,
With inward contemplations, ecstasies,
And visitings from heaven, and many a time
Was rapt in God ; and, in a word, throughout
Those years aforesaid all on fire he seemed,
Burning with love of Christ ; and this befell
On the holy mount of Vernia. And since
God for His children hath peculiar care—
Dispensing to them at their several times
Now solace, and now dole, now prosperous hap,
Now adverse, as He seeth that they have need,
For to sustain them in humility,
Or kindle them the more to fond desire
Of heavenly things—after three years it pleased
God's goodness from the aforesaid Brother John
To filch that joy and flame of love divine,
And pluck from him all solace of the soul :
Whereat without light Brother John remained,
And without love of God, all comfortless,
Downcast and wobegone. For which thing's sake
Thus full of anguish through the wood he went
Hither and thither with cries, tears, and sighs,
Calling on his belov'd, his spirit's spouse,
Who had so hidden himself, and gone from him ;
Without whose presence nor repose nor rest
Could his soul compass : in no place nathless
Could he by any means sweet Jesu find,
Nor to those rapturous spirit-thrills of love

For Christ restore him, as he wont to do.
And many days this trouble stayed by him,
The while in ceaseless tears and sighs he still
Persévered, praying that of His pity God
Would give him back his soul's belovèd spouse.
At last when, as God willed, He had enow
His patience proved, and kindled his desire,
One day, as Brother John through the said wood
Was pacing, thus afflicted and distressed,
In very weariness he sat him down,
Against a beech-tree leaning, and remained
With face all bathed in tears, and gazing up
To heaven. And suddenly, behold ! appeared
Jesu the Christ beside him in the path
Whence Brother John had come ; but naught He
spake.
And Brother John, beholding, recognized
The Christ, and cast him suddenly at His feet,
And with unmeasured tears in humblest wise
Besought Him, saying : 'Lord, help me, seeing
that I
Without Thee, Saviour, do in darkness dwell
And grief ; most tender Angel, without Thee
In grief I dwell and anguish ; without Thee,
Son of the most high God, I stand ashamed,
Confounded ; without Thee bereft am I
Of every blessing, and as one struck blind,
Since thou art Jesu, very light of souls ;
Without Thee I am lost and damned, since Thou
Art life of souls, yea, of all lives the life ;

Without Thee barren I am and dry, since Thou
Art source of every gift and every grace ;
Without Thee I am all disconsolate,
Since Thou art Jesu, our redemption, love,
Desire—that comfortable bread and wine
Which cheers the hearts of Angels and all Saints :
Illumine me, most gracious Master mine,
Most pitiful Shepherd, for Thy sheep am I,
Albeit unworthy.' But whereas the fond
Desire of holy men, which God delays
To answer, kindleth them to mightier love
And merit, Christ the blessed went His way
Nor heeding him, nor speaking, and so passed
Adown the aforesaid path. Then Brother John
Rose and ran after, fell at His feet once more,
And with a holy importunity
Stayed and besought Him, with devout tears saying :
' O most sweet Jesu, pity my distress ;
In the multitude of Thy mercy, by the truth
Of Thy salvation, hear and heed my cry ;
Restore to me the gladness of Thy face
And pitiful regard, since all the earth
O'erfloweth with Thy mercy.' And again
Christ turned from him, and answered not a word,
Nor gave him any comfort, but instead
Dealt with him as a mother with her child,
Who maketh him desire the breast and run
Behind her weeping, that thereafter he
May be more fain to take it. Brother John
Thereat with mightier ardour and desire

Followed the Christ ; and, coming up with Him,
The blessed Christ toward him turned, and looked
With glad regard and gracious, and therewith,
Opening His merciful most holy arms,
Clasped him with utmost sweetness ; and, as thus
His arms He widely opened, Brother John
Saw issuing from the Saviour's sacred breast
Such rays of marvellous light, as all the wood
And his own soul and body did illumine.

Then Brother John fell at the feet of Christ ;
And blessed Jesu gave him graciously,
As erst the Magdalen, His foot to kiss ;
And Brother John with deepest reverence
Took and with tears so bathed it, that he seemed
A second Magdalen, devoutly saying :

‘ I pray Thee, Lord, upon my trespasses
Look not, but for Thy sacred passion's sake,
And by the sprinkling of Thy precious blood,
With Thy love's grace reanimate my heart
Seeing that this is Thy command, that Thee
With all our heart and all our soul we love,
The which commandment may no man fulfil,
Save only with Thine aid : O aid me then,
Thou best-belovèd Son of God, with all
My heart to love Thee, and with all my strength.’

And thus as at the feet of Jesu Christ .

Spake Brother John, his prayer was heard of Him,
And he received the former grace, to wit,
The flame of love divine, and felt himself
Wholly renewed and comforted ; and, knowing

The gift of divine grace restored to him,
He 'gan give thanks unto the blessed Christ,
And kiss His feet ; and afterward, whenas
He rose to gaze upon the Saviour's face,
Christ proffered and outstretched His sacred hands,
That he might kiss them : and when Brother John
Had kissed them, he drew nearer and pressed close
To Jesu's bosom, and embraced and kissed
His ever sacred breast, and Christ embraced
And kissed him. And in this embrace and kiss
Such divine fragrance Brother John perceived,
That, had all spices in the world, all things
Of odorous breath, been gathered into one,
Beside that perfume they had noisome seemed.
And Brother John all ravished was thereby,
And soothed, and lightened ; and for many months
Did that sweet savour in his soul remain.
And from his lips, at heavenly wisdom's fount
Thus watered from the Saviour's sacred breast,
Thenceforth words issued wondrous and divine,
Which changed their hearts who heard him, and
brought forth
Much fruit of souls. And in the woodland path,
Whereon the blessed feet of Christ had stood,
And a good space around it, Brother John
Perceived the fragrance and the splendour still,
Long after, oft as thitherward he went.
And Brother John returning to himself
After this ecstasy, when lost to sight
Christ's bodily presence, so from the abyss

Of His divinity remained in soul
Illumined, that, albeit of human lore
Unlearn'd, nathless he marvellously solved
And cleared the subtlest questions and profound
Of the Holy Trinity, and deep mysteries
Hid in the sacred Scriptures. And full oft,
Whenas before the Pope and Cardinals,
Before the King and barons, he discoursed—
Masters and doctors—they were all amazed
At the deep thoughts and lofty words he spake.
Unto the praise of Jesu Christ. Amen.

XLIX

HOW BROTHER JOHN, SAYING MASS
FOR THE DEAD, SAW MANY SOULS
SET FREE FROM PURGATORY

ONCE on the morrow of All Hallows Day,
When the said Brother John was saying Mass
For all the souls o' the dead, as Holy Church
Ordaineth, with such potency of love,
And such compassionate ruth, that sacrament
Sublime he offered, which for efficacy,
Beyond all else that can be wrought for them,
The souls o' the dead desire, that he appeared
All melted by the sweetness of his ruth
And love fraternal. Wherefore in that Mass,
As he devoutly raised the Body of Christ,
And unto God the Father offered it—
For love of Jesu Christ His blessed Son,
Who to redeem souls hung upon the Cross,
Praying Him out of Purgatory-pains
Vouchsafe set free the souls o' the dead, by Him
Created and redeemed—sudden he saw
As 'twere an endless multitude of souls
Come forth from Purgatory, as countless sparks
Fly from a furnace-fire, and saw them mount
To heaven by merit of Christ's Passion, who
For quick and dead is offered day by day
In that most sacred Host, worthy to be
For ever and ever worshippèd. Amen.

L

HOW BROTHER JAMES OF FALLERONE APPEARED AFTER DEATH TO BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA

It chanced upon the time when Brother James
 Of Fallerone, a right holy man,
 In Mogliano's Convent lay sore sick,
 Which is in Fermo's Ward, that Brother John
 Of Vernia, as aforesaid, dwelling then
 I' the House of Massa, of his sickness heard,
 And, since he loved him as his own dear sire,
 Fell straight to prayer for him, beseeching God
 Devoutly in the orisons of his mind
 To the said Brother James He would restore
 Soundness of body, if that might serve his soul.
 And while thus praying devoutly, he was rapt
 Into a trance, and saw a mighty host
 In the air of many Angels and of Saints
 Standing above the cell of Brother James,
 That was within the wood, so dazzling bright,
 That all the country round was lit thereby.
 And 'mid these Angels he saw Brother James,
 The sick man whom he prayed for, in white robes
 Resplendent: and among them therewithal
 Saint Francis, holy Father, he beheld
 Decked with the sacred Stigmata of Christ,

And with great glory. And the saintly form
Of Brother Lucido he saw and knew,
And Brother Matthew of Rubbiano's mount,
And Brethren more beside, ne'er seen of him
Or known in this life. And as Brother John
Was gazing on this blessed company
With great delight, it was revealed to him
That of a surety this sick Brother's soul
Was saved, and of that sickness he would die,
But that, e'en so, he would not after death
Pass instantly to Paradise, but must
In Purgatory awhile be purified.
Upon this revelation Brother John
Felt at the saving of his soul such joy,
That for the body's death he grieved no whit,
And in the rapture of his heart exclaimed
Within himself, and said : ' O Brother James,
Sweet Father ! Brother James, my Brother sweet !
O Brother James, most faithful thrall of God !
Companion of the Angels, Brother James,
And compeer of the blessed ! ' And amid
This joy and surety to himself he came,
And the same instant gat him from the House,
And went to visit the said Brother James
At Mogliano, and, there finding him
So sorely burdened that he scarce could speak,
Foretold to him his body's death, and eke
The saving and the glory of his soul,
According to the certainty he had,
By divine revelation : whereupon,

Waxed glad in soul and countenance, Brother James
Received him with great joy and merry laugh,
And, rendering thanks for the good news he bare,
Devoutly did commend himself to him.
Then Brother John besought him tenderly
That after death he would vouchsafe return,
And tell him of his state : and Brother James
Gave him his promise, an God willed it so.
And these words spoken, when the hour drew nigh
For his departure, Brother James 'gan say
That verse o' the Psalm : ' I will lie down in peace,
And in eternal life will take my rest ' :
And, this verse said, with blithe and happy face
He passed from this life. Afterward, when now
He had been buried, Brother John returned
Unto the House of Massa, and therein
Looked for the promise Brother James had given
That on the appointed day he would return.
But the said day, as he was praying, Christ
With a great company appeared to him
Of Angels and of Saints, and Brother James
Was not among them. Wherefore Brother John
Much marvelling commended him to Christ
Devoutly. Afterward, the following day,
As Brother John was in the wood at prayer,
Lo ! companied with Angels, Brother James
Appeared to him, all glorious and glad :
And Brother John bespake him : ' Father, why
Upon the promised day returnedst thou not ? '
Made answer Brother James : ' For that some need

I had of purifying ; but in that hour
When Christ appeared to thee, and thou therewith
Commendest me to Him, Christ heard thy prayer,
And from all pain released me ; thereupon
To Brother James of Massa I appeared ;
And that devout lay-Brother, who the Mass
Was serving, saw the consecrated Host,
In act of elevation by the priest,
Changed and transformed to a fair living Child ;
And I bespake him : " With this Child to-day
Of life eternal to the realm I go,
The which can no man enter without Him." "
And, these words spoken, Brother James was gone,
Passing with all that blissful company
Of Angels into heaven ; and Brother John
Remained much solaced.

The said Brother James

Of Fallerone on the Vigil died
Of holy James the Apostle, in the month
July, and in the aforesaid monastery
Of Mogliano ; where the grace of God
After his death, and for his merit's sake,
Wrought wonders.

To the praise of Christ. Amen.

LI

HOW BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA
HAD A VISION IN WHICH WERE
REVEALED TO HIM THE HIDDEN
MYSTERIES OF GOD

Now seeing that Brother John of Vernia
Aforesaid had effectually foregone
All worldly solace and delights of time,
His whole delight, and his whole hope, on God
Reposing, therefore were vouchsafed to him
Of divine Goodness wondrous comfortings
And revelations, and in special wise
Upon the feast of Christ ; whence on a time,
The season of Christ's birth now drawing nigh,
Wherein from Jesu's sweet humanity
He looked sure solace to receive of God,
The Holy Spirit in his soul did plant
Such masterful exuberance of love
And fervour for the charity of Christ,
In that He did abase Himself to take
Our flesh upon Him, that in very sooth
His soul did seem drawn from the body forth,
And burning like a furnace : the which fire
Unable to sustain, with anguish wrung,
He, all his being molten, cried aloud,

Since through the Holy Spirit's fierce assault,
And the surpassing fervour of his love,
He could not hold from crying. And at that hour,
Wherein this boundless fervour came to him,
Came therewithal the hope so sure and strong
Of his salvation, that for naught i' the world
Believed he, should death fall upon him then,
He needs must pass to Purgatory ; and this
For half a year endured, albeit not thus
Continually that wild excess he felt
Of fervour ; but at certain times o' the day
It came to him : and then and afterward
Received he visitations from on high,
And comforts marvellous and manifold,
And many a time was rapt in God, as saw
That Brother, who from the first these matters
wrote.

Among which times he was one night so raised
And rapt in God, that he beheld in Him—
In their Creator—all created things
That are in heaven and earth, and, each by each,
All their perfections, orders, and degrees.
And then discerned he clear how everything
Created its Creator doth display,
And how God is above, within, without,
Beside, all things created. Therewithal
Three Persons in one God he skilled to know,
And one God in three Persons, and the love
How infinite which made the Son of God
Take flesh, obedient to the Father's will.

And lastly in that vision he perceived
How that none other way there was whereby
The soul might come to God, and compass life
Eternal, save through Christ, the blessed One,
Who is the Way, the Truth, the Life o' the soul.

Amen.

LII

HOW BROTHER JOHN OF VERNIA
WAS ENTRANCED WHILE SAYING
MASS

To the said Brother John within the House
Of Mogliano aforesaid, as relate
The Brothers who were present, once befell
This marvellous hap, to wit that the first night
After Saint Lawrence' Octave, and within
Our Lady's Octave of the Assumption Feast,
When with the other Brethren he had said
Matins in church, and on him unawares
The unction 'gan of heavenly grace descend,
He gat him to the garden, there to brood
Upon Christ's Passion, and dispose himself
With his whole soul to celebrate the Mass
Which on that morn it was his lot to chant.
And as he brooded on those words that are
The consecration of the Body of Christ—
The ' Hoc est Corpus Meum '—pondering
Christ's boundless love, whereby it pleased Him
Not only with His precious blood redeem,
But eke bequeath us for our spirit's food
His body and blood most worshipful, the love
Of the sweet Jesu 'gan so grow in him
To warmth and rapture, that his soul no more
Could bear such sweetness; but he cried aloud

As drunken in spirit, and ceased not to himself
Repeating : ' Hoc est Corpus Meum ' ; since
So saying, he seemed to see the blessed Christ,
With the Maid Mary and a multitude
Of Angels, and, so saying, was illumined
In all the mysteries profound and high
Of that exalted Sacrament. And when
Dawn now appeared, he passed into the church
In that soul-fervour, that solicitude,
That utterance on his lips, and thinking not
That he was seen or heard of any man ;
Nathless within the Choir there was at prayer
A certain Brother who saw and heard it all.
And in this fervour, through the overflow
Of heavenly grace unable to refrain,
With a loud voice he cried, continuing thus
Until the hour of Mass, whenas he turned
To make him ready, and to the Altar went.
And, Mass begun, the further in that Mass
He fared, the greater grew his love for Christ,
And fervour of devotion ; and therewith
Was given a sense of God unspeakable,
The which himself conceived not, nor with tongue
Could utter. And fearing lest this sense of God
And the said fervour should so wax in strength
That he must leave the Mass, he fell in great
Perplexity, nor wist what course to take—
Or to proceed, or tarry. And since the like
Had erst at times befallen him, and the Lord
That fervour had so tempered, that to leave

The Mass he had needed not, so trusted he
Now for like power, and with great fear began
Go forward with the Mass, and came at length
To the Preface of Our Lady, when so waxed
Within him the divine illumining
And gracious sweetness of the love of God,
That coming to the words 'Qui pridie,'
Such rapturous sweetness he could scarce endure.
At last, in act to consecrate, and o'er
The Host now saying the consecrative words,
When half the words, to wit 'Hoc est,' were said,
By no means further might he win, but stood
These words 'Hoc est' repeating, and no more.
And why he might not further win was this,
For that Christ's presence he both felt and saw
Girt with an angel-host, whose majesty
Sustain he could not : and he saw that Christ
Would enter not the Host, or that the Host
Would change not to the Body of Christ, if he
Not uttered of those words the second half,
To wit, the 'Corpus Meum.' Whereupon,
While he remained in this solicitude,
And could no further go, the Guardians
And other brethren, with lay-folk beside
A many, that were in church to hear the Mass,
Drew nigh the altar, and beheld amazed
The acts of Brother John ; and many of them
Wept for devotion. After a long while
When, as God willed it, Brother John pronounced
With loud voice 'Corpus Meum,' suddenly

Vanished the form of bread within the Host,
And Jesu Christ, the blessed One, appeared
Incarnate, glorified, revealing plain
The meekness and the love which made Him take
Flesh of the Virgin Mary, and maketh Him
Into the priest's hands day by day to pass,
Whenas the Host he consecrates : whereby
He was yet more in sweetness upward borne
Of contemplation. Wherefore when he now
Had raised the Host on high, and therewithal
The cup had consecrated, he was rapt
From his own self, and, being from bodily ~~sense~~
In soul suspended, back his body fell ;
And, save that by the guardian he was held,
Who stood behind him, he had fallen to earth.
Whereat the Brothers who were in the church,
And lay-folk, men and women, running up
Together, he was carried as one dead
Into the sacristy ; for cold his form
And corpse-like ; and the fingers of his hands
Were clenched so firm that scarce could they unclasp
Or stir them. Thus as one half-dead he lay,
Or rapt, till Tierce ; and it was summer-time.
And seeing that I, who was there present, yearned
Exceedingly to know how God had wrought
Toward him, soon as to himself he came,
I went and prayed him for the love of God
To tell me the whole matter : wherefore he,
Since well he trusted me, told all the tale
In order ; saying among other things

That as he pondered on the body and blood
Of Jesu Christ, and also therebefore,
The blood within him had dissolved like wax
Much molten, and his flesh all boneless seemed,
So that he could not lift or hand or arm,
To make the sign o' the Cross above the Host
Or chalice ; and he told me this beside,
That ere he was made priest, it was of God
Revealed to him that he would swoon in Mass,
But, for that many Masses he had said,
And this had ne'er befallen him, he deemed
The revelation had not been of God :
Nathless, that haply fifty days before
The Assumption of Our Lady, during which
The aforesaid hap befall him, 'twas again
Revealed to him of God, that this would fall
About the time of the Assumption Feast,
But that he afterward remembered not
The revelation.

To Christ's praise. Amen.

NOTE

THE text of the *Fioretti*, followed in this translation, that of the Codice Riccardiano at Florence, of the teenth century, as embodied in the edition of G. L. Isserini, published in 1903. In some instances, however, preference has been given to other readings, rrowed, with two exceptions, from Luigi Manzoni's ition of 1902, which is based on the Codice Palatino, ting 1396.

In the choice of readings, as well as in the interpretation, I have been partly guided by reference to the iginal Latin version, and have also consulted the cellent prose rendering of Sir T. W. Arnold, together th that edited by the late Cardinal Manning in 1863, d another published in 1899 by Messrs. Kegan Paul d Co., founded on the translation issued by the anciscan Fathers at Upton.

The following is a list of the variants here adopted :

GE LINE

3 12 *possessori* for *professori*.
6 9 *che periva, e per* for *che per via et meço dello*.
6 17 After *al fine* add *nello quale elgli vedeva una
fornacie ardente, nella quale*.
6 11 *forestiere, i frati il pregarono* for *frati
forestieri, etc.*
1 21 *et anchora pochi luoghi* for *poi che i luoghi*.
1 24 After *di spirito* add *di Cristo*.
2 15 After *ricevuto* add *all' Ordine. Andò dunque,
e fu ricevuto*.
6 28 *Iddio a* for *i' ò*.
8 12 *in choro* for *intorno*.

THE LIFE OF BROTHER GILES

BROTHER GILES OF ASSISI

Received into the Order	23 April 1208 or 1209
Died	23 April 1262

The earliest available Life of Brother Giles is contained in the Chronica XXIV Generalium (completed in 1379). This version in English by James Rhoades was first published posthumously in The World's Classics in 1925 and reprinted in 1934, 1947 and 1949.

I

THE LIFE OF BROTHER GILES

BEGINNETH here how Brother Giles did live,
 A man right saintly and contemplative ;
 For holy patterns that in Saints appear
 Do prick the hearts of the devout, who hear,
 To spurn delight in transitory things,
 And kindle them to eager covetings
 Of the true riches that eternal are.
 And therefore of our Lord will I declare
 And utter forth words wondrous to reveal,
 Unto God's honour and the hearer's weal,
 Which in our holy Father, Brother Giles,
 The Holy Ghost accomplished, as erewhiles
 By his companions I have heard it told,
 And, with the said Saint communing of old,
 Myself have learned, who did his bosom share,
 And put the same in writing, howsoe'er
 Unworthy. But as God foreshowed to him
 Now first a convert, yet in laic trim,
 That he to high perfection must attain,
 E'en so was our Lord's hand not laid in vain
 Upon him ; for himself 'gan ponder how
 He might in all things please our Lord.

Lo ! now,
 Like to some new forerunner of the King,
 The ever-blest Saint Francis, fashioning

By marvellous ensamples fair to tread
The ways of patience and of lowlihead !
Who being two years converted, it befell
A wondrous man in wit adorned well,
Hight Bernard, passing rich, and one men call
Peter Cathanny, did his lure enthral
The vows of gospel poverty to keep.
For at his bidding all their worldly heap
Dispersing to poor folk they made away,
And the stern rule embracing from that day
Of gospel penitence and perfectness,
Forthwith did on the Minor Brothers' dress,
And in great fervour of spirit hied them both
Within the Order. Brother Giles in troth
Anon these tidings of Saint Francis learned,
Being yet laic, and after eight days burned
With fire divine, and as the following day—
Feast of our Lord and of Saint George—he lay,
From the world's weal twelve hundred years and nine,
Rose up at dawn, and to Saint George's shrine
Came, where is now the Convent of Saint Clare,
Mindful of his soul's health, and, done his prayer,
Yearned sore the blessed Francis for to see.
With Bernard then of Quintavalle he
Lodged in a little cot, wherein abode
Peter Cathanny. Thither then he strode
By the straight path, still pondering in his mind
The things that he had spurned and left behind,
When lo ! Saint Francis, on his homeward way
From out the wood where he had gone to pray,

Met him : and Brother Giles made haste to greet
Beholding him, and threw him at his feet,
Kneeling, and tenderly besought that he
Would deign receive him of his company.
To whom Saint Francis answered : ' Dear my friend,
Great grace, methinks, our Lord to thee doth send ;
For, if the Emperor to Assisi came,
And of the city-folk should certain claim
To be his knights, were they not bound enow
To welcome him ? Much more our Lord art thou,
Whom He hath chosen for His thrall and knight.'
Thus did the blessed Francis cheer his sprite
With comfortable words, and eke bade know
With what vocation he was called ; and so
Himself too greeted him, and, having led
Within the house of Brother Bernard, said :
' A Brother, see, the Lord hath sent us here ! '
And in the Lord's name they received him there.

II

OF HIS VISIT TO SAINT JAMES'S
SHRINE, AND TO THE HOLY
SEPULCHRE

Not long had Brother Giles the habit ta'en,
Ere as a pilgrim to Saint James's fane
From Lord Saint Francis he gat leave to wend ;
And so it fell that, ere his journey's end
Upon that road, he might not drive aback
The hunger born of poverty's sore lack,
The which nathless he suffered with good will,
Sith no man might he find his lack to fill.
And coming to a certain barn one day,
Wherin a remnant of bean-seeds there lay,
He gleaned and ate them, and slept night-long there :
And so our Lord refreshed him with that fare,
As he of divers dainties had partook.
And in good sooth far liefer might he brook
To house in wastes and solitudes, than where
Much folk abounded, that for fast and prayer
He lack not leisure. Once, as he did go,
A beggar asked an alms of him, and lo !
His hood he gave him, having naught beside,
And twenty days thereafter hoodless hied.
But to a Lombard village when he came,
Hight Ficarollo, as he passed the same,

One called to him, and he, for poverty
Being sore straitened, at his call drew nigh,
Thinking to have some gift of him : but he
Put dice into his hand, I trow, for fee,
And with the said dice challenged him to play :
And, nothing angered, Brother Giles did say
Meekly : ' May our Lord pardon thee ! ' E'en so,
As through the world it was his lot to go,
Full oft he met with mockeries.

After that,

Free licence of Saint Francis' hand he gat
And warranty, with one companion eke,
Our Lord Christ Jesu's Sepulchre to seek,
And other regions of that holy clime :
But, at Brudese's port arrived, some time
He needs must tarry, waiting for the ship.
Meanwhile a water-pot he took in grip,
And through the town went calling : ' Who will buy
Water ? ' and for his wage gat food supply
Whereof his fellow and himself were fain.
Thereafter, having passed the midway main,
Unto the Sepulchre of Christ he sped,
And other holy places visited
With uttermost devotion. But, while he
Lingered the time in Accon by the sea,
Constrained to labour with his hands, he wove
Baskets of reeds, for folk made use thereof
Who sojourned there, and through the town withal
Bare water, or dead men to burial :
By the which means he earned him daily bread

222 VISIT TO ST. JAMES'S SHRINE

And other needs. If this might not bestead,
To our Lord's table he returned once more,
And of the folk asked alms from door to door.
From thence returning homeward, at the last
He to our Lady of the Angels passed.

III

HOW HE WAS MARVELLOUSLY FED UPON THE JOURNEY

SAINT ANGELS and Saint Nicholas du Bar
He visited devoutly, and, afar
Roaming the earth, did men and women draw
With exhortation to God's love and awe,
And to do penance for their sins.

One day,
Being sore spent with hunger and the way,
He fell asleep, as do way-wearied folk,
And, when from out that slumber he awoke,
Lo ! of God's bounty found beside his head,
Whereby he was refreshed and comforted.

IV

HOW HE SOUGHT MARTYRDOM
BEYOND THE SEA

Now, seeing his fold increase and multiply,
My Lord Saint Francis longed right earnestly
Some Brethren to the Saracens to send
And other misbelievers, to the end
They preach to them, nor, if need be, deny
For the profession of the Faith to die.
And seeing that Brother Giles was apt therein
And meet, he sent him to the barbarous kin :
Into whose country when at length he came,
And to a town that Tunis hath to name,
A certain Saracen of high repute
For holiness, who had long time been mute,
Now 'gan to speak and cry aloud to them :
'Here cometh who shall sever, root and stem,
Both law and prophet : therefore my rede saith
That with the sword this man be done to death.'
Then from the Paynim-folk loud clamour rose
And uproar ; and the Christians—to wit those
With whom the Brothers now were sojourning,
And Brother Giles among them—for this thing
Fearing to die, did with much violence
Back to their vessel drive the Brothers thence,
Nor with the Paynim suffered them have speech.
To whom the Brothers from the ship 'gan preach.

And boldly, as the Spirit of God sufficed,
Aflame with fire divine, bade turn to Christ,
Earnestly longing for the Faith to die.
But, since the Christians hindered them, whereby
They could not compass that they came to do,
Unto Saint Francis' home once more they drew.

V

HOW HE WAS MIRACULOUSLY RESTORED FROM COLD TO WARMTH;
AND OF OTHER MATTERS

Now seeing that Brother Giles was perfected
In virtues and in grace, Saint Francis said
Unto the other Brethren : 'Here,' quoth he,
'My Knight of the Round Table ye may see.'
When Brother Giles would of Saint Francis
know

What he would have him do, or whither go,
The Saint replied to him : 'Go wheresoe'er
Thou wilt, my son, thy place awaits thee there.'
Thus then for three days wandering at will,
He could not rest in spirit or be still
With such large liberty. For which thing's
sake

Unto Saint Francis he returned, and spake :
'My Father, send me whereso' seems thee best,
But send me, sith my conscience cannot rest
So loosely bound.' Him then he bade anon
To Fabrione's hermitage begone,
Nigh to Perugia. And upon that road
Barefoot and clad but in one coat he strode,
Albeit 'twas winter and a mighty frost.

Quoth one to him : ' The gait forsooth thou go'st
I would not go to win me Paradise.'

At the which word such coldness as of ice
Took hold upon him, he came near to die.
So he bethought him in his agony
How that our Lord Christ Jesu erst did go
Barefoot and naked, and, thus thinking, lo !
Anon waxed warm again ; whereat he paid
Honour to God most high, that without aid
Of earthly fire that sudden warmth he felt.

But, when for many a year he there had dwelt,
One day, remembering him of sin, he hied
Into the wood, and summoned to his side
A Brother, and, stripping, o'er his neck let fall
A rope, and bade the Brother therewithal
Hale him to his own place ; and, at the place
Arriving thus, he cried aloud in face
Of all the Brethren : ' Brothers mine,' quoth he,
' Be merciful, be merciful, to me
A sinner ! ' And, seeing him in this naked trim,
The Brothers all 'gan weep, and said to him :
' Here, Father, is thy tunic.' He replied :
' Unworthy am I, unworthy to abide
Among the Minor Brothers ! It nathless
Will I receive in mine unworthiness,
As a dear alms-gift, an ye grant it so.'

Now Brother Giles made little huts, I trow,
To house the cups and caskets that he wrought,
Which with his fellow to the town he brought,
And therewith purchased all that they did need

Of food and raiment. At that time indeed
Leisure so served for handicraft, that he
Did clothe a Brother, and for that charity
Besought him, whensoe'er the giver lay
Resting or sleeping, for his soul to pray.

VI

HOW A CERTAIN PRIEST CALLED
HIM HYPOCRITE

ONE day, returning from a certain place,
And by a church now passing, to his face
A priest cried 'Hypocrite!' and at the word
So grieved was Brother Giles that, having heard,
He could not hold from weeping; in which grief
A Brother found him, and inquired in brief:
'Wherefore so sad?' 'A priest hath said,' quoth he,
'I am a hypocrite.' 'Think'st so to be,
Therefore?' the other cried. 'Methinks at least
Priests lie not, and methinks he is a priest.'
To whom that friar: 'My Father, sooth to say,
The thoughts of men can oftentimes go astray,
And are not as the thoughts of God,' he said:
Which heard, the heart in him was comforted.

VII

HOW HE WEPT FOR BROTHER ELIAS;
AND OF HIS PROMPT OBEDIENCE

WHENAS to Brother Giles the tale was told
How Brother Elias tripped, who was of old
Chief Minister, but now a rebel found—
Banned of the Pope—he threw him on the ground,
Lamenting sore, and, asked thereof, did say :
' Thus I abase me lowly as I may
For Brother Elias, who was erst so great,
But now is fallen from his high estate
Through pride and disobedience.'

It befell
Once at Agello's House he chanced to dwell,
And from the said place had gone forth, when lo !
Called by the Minister in Chief to go
And seek him at Assisi, he would not
To his own place return, but from the spot
Whereon he stood, when he that summons heard,
Addressed him to his journey at the word :
And this he did but for obedience' sake,
Whose holy fetter he still feared to break.

VIII

HOW HE BADE A BROTHER PREFER
OBEDIENCE TO PRAYER

ONCE on a time a Brother in his cell
Was praying, when the Guardian, as befell,
Bade him arise seek bread for alms-giving.
And so indignant was he at this thing
That unto Brother Giles, who chanced to bide
Then in that Convent, having straightway hied,
'Father, while praying in my cell,' he said,
'The Guardian bade me forth to quest for bread ;
But to my thinking, maugre his behest,
To pray seems better than for bread to quest.'
Made answer Brother Giles : ' Of prayer, I ween,
Brother, yet know'st thou naught : true prayer is e'en
To do his will who is set over thee.'
And once, ' It is a sign of pride,' said he,
' To yoke thee to Obedience, and anon
Draw back again, some path to enter on,
Which seems to thee more perfect. Even so
Is an obedient Brother like, I trow,
To a good knight, and set on a good horse,
Who midmost of his foes doth run a course,
But can of none be wounded. Therewithal
A disobedient Brother I will call
A sorry knight set on a sorry horse,
Who lightly by his enemies perforce

Is wounded, and borne headlong to the ground
And slain, or in perpetual durance bound.'

Of such devotion was this Brother Giles,
Of grace so nurtured, that he spake at whiles
With angels, and of a good monk would say,
Above all gifts the best is to obey.

IX

HOW HE HEALED A CERTAIN MAN
GRIEVOUSLY DISEASED

ONCE Brother Giles upon the highway met
One riding toward Assisi, there to let
Hew off his leg, for a sore malady
He had, whereof no healing else could be
Save by the knife. And he with eyes abrim
Showed it to Brother Giles, and begged of him
To sign the Cross upon the sore ; who now,
With ruth and pity touched, did humbly bow
And kiss the wound, and full devoutly trace
The sign o' the Cross thereon. In a brief space
The sick man, healed, and thanking God for this,
Back to his house returned in mighty bliss.

X

HOW A MASTER IN THEOLOGY
HUSHED HIS PREACHING AT
THE BIDDING OF BROTHER
GILES

ONE time a Master in theology,
The which an English Brother chanced to be,
Was preaching at Saint Damian's House before
Saint Clare and Brother Giles, and had no more
Than a brief space launched forth upon his way,
When with much fervour Brother Giles did say :
' Hold, Master ! for myself to preach am fain ' :
Wherewithal he ceased, and Brother Giles amain
' Gan utter of God's word the honeyed flow ;
Then, in brief space, to the said Master : ' Lo !
Finish,' quoth he, ' the theme thou didst begin.'
And he took up his argument therein,
And ended. Which when Sister Clare had seen,
With a glad heart she cried : ' This day, I ween,
Our Father Francis hath his heart's desire,
Who whilome said to me : " I do aspire
In our Lord's name my Brother-Clerks to see
Attain such fullness of humility,
That, if a lay-Brother to preach be fain,

The Master in theology refrain
From preaching at his summons, and give o'er."
I tell you, Brothers mine, the Master more
Hath edified me, who did thus refrain,
Than had I seen the dead made quick again.'

XI

HOW BROTHER GILES EARNED HIS
LIVING BY THE LABOUR OF HIS
HANDS

WHEN he was sent to Rome, and sojourned there,
E'en as he set before him when whilere
He joined the Order, fain would he therein
Live by the labour of his hands, and win
For the said purpose sure accomplishment.
First before all then to hear Mass he went
Devoutly, and thereafter to the wood
Hied him, which three miles from the city stood
And faggots thence upon his shoulders brought
And took no money for his wage, nor aught
Save things folk need to live by. And one day
He met a woman on his homeward way,
Would buy of him ; and, done their bargaining,
Unto her house the faggots he must bring.
Then, seeing him one of the devout, when she
Would have o'erpaid her promise, ' Nay,' quoth he,
' Right loth were I to be the thrall of greed ' ;
Nor only would not at her hand be fee'd
Beyond their bargain, but therefrom withdrew
The half of that which was his lawful due.
Then much the woman marvelled, and henceforth
In high devotion held him. Be its worth
How vile soe'er, nathless he had no shame

Of that he wrought, so he might do the same
Untainted of dishonour, even as when
In vintage-time he holp the husbandmen
Pluck off the grapes, and to the winepress bear,
And tread them. Passing once the city-square,
He met a man who fain his help had hired
For gathering walnuts ; but the task required
He boggled at for tallness of the trees.
Nathless a covenant was pight that these
Should share the nuts betwixt them. Wherefore he,
Armed with the holy sign, did climb the tree,
And beat the nuts off, and received his share ;
Which being too many in his lap to bear,
He doffed his tunic, the sole weed he wore,
And, hood and sleeves tied wallet-wise, did pour
The nuts therein, and, on bare shoulders slung,
Haled thence, to mete them needy folk among.
In harvest-time with other poor he went
Gleaning the corn-ears, and, were any bent
On giving him of the grain a handful free,
He would refuse it, for 'in sooth,' said he,
'No barn have I my harvesting to hold' :
And, what thus gleaned he, to the poor he
doled.
One day when he was at the monastery
Of the Four Saints, which to the house stood nigh
Where he was sojourning, it so befell
The baker of the monks in that hostel
Sought one to bolt his flour, and made a pact
With Brother Giles to do it, that for this act,

And carrying water, and eke helping bake,
He should seven loaves to his own portion take.

From every task he spared a space to say
His Hours ; and having for the monks one day
Gone to fetch water from San Sisto's well,
A man, who begged of him to drink a spell,
Met him on his return ; and he replied :
‘ ‘Tis meet the monks, ere thou, be satisfied’ :
Whereat the man waxed wroth with him, and spake
Injurious words. Then Brother Giles did take
The monks their water, and returned, distressed
Rather for that wild tumult in his breast
Who asked of him to drink, than for the mock
Uttered against himself—so took the crock
To the said well, and filled, and when he came
To his abode who spake the words of shame,
Said : ‘ Here is water ; drink and spare no whit,
Giving to whom thou wouldest.’ He, hearing it,
Pricked to the very heart, his pardon prayed
For those injurious words which he had said,
And, being freely pardoned, from that day
Did honour and high reverence to him pay.

XII

HOW HE WROUGHT FOR HIS OWN
LIVING IN A CARDINAL'S PALACE

WHEN the holy Father at Rieti was,
Frascati's bishop, Cardinal Nicholas,
For many shining marks of sanctity
Desiring to have Brother Giles anigh,
Fondly besought him at his house to bide,
And be by him with daily food supplied.
Now touching his abode he answered yea,
But, as for all things needful day by day,
Take them he would not, sith by toil of hand
He fain would live, as of the prophet-band
Spake David : ' When that thou shalt eat,' saith he,
' The labour of thine hand, O well is thee ! '

This too Saint Francis taught, and caused be writ
In Rule and Testament, confirming it,
That all the Brethren labour loyally,
And that the wage of this their labour be
The food men live by. Prayed him then my Lord
The Cardinal at least at the same board
To eat with him, and therein he obeyed.
Wherefore each morn he gat him forth to aid
Pick olives, or some other task, and so
To sate his need he daily earned enow.
And at the board of the said Cardinal,
Oft as he sat him down, he therewithal

Brought bread that he had won with his brow's
sweat,
And put before him, and thereof did eat.
One day it chanced there fell so great a rain,
That Brother Giles might win not forth to gain
His bread, as he was wont: whereat did say
The Cardinal: 'O Brother Giles, to-day
Needs must thou of my viands eat, I trow.'
And Brother Giles, for that day pondering how
Somewhat to earn, did to the kitchen wend,
And thus the cook accosted: 'Wherefore, friend,
Hast thou so foul a kitchen?' 'For that I,'
Quoth he, 'have none to cleanse it.' By and by
At eating-time to table he did bring
His bread, won from the cook for furbishing
The kitchen: which when saw the Cardinal,
He marvelled much, and was ill-pleased withal,
Thus baulked of his desire. And the next day,
As on the day before, the rain had sway;
And, even as then, so now bespeak him must
The Cardinal. But he, perceiving rust
Upon the house-knives, to the pantler said
He fain would scour and whet them; and he made
His bargain for two loaves, and so did whet
And scour them, and on that day likewise ate
Of his own toil. Whate'er the task, his part
He bore full willingly with cheerful heart.

XIII

HOW BROTHER GILES WAS MIRACULOUSLY PROVIDED WITH THINGS NEEDFUL

THEREAFTER Brother Giles, Lent drawing nigh,
Fain to some solitary place would hie,
Wherein his spirit might find rest. And so
He craved leave of the Cardinal to go :
But of his going being ill-content,
The Cardinal waxed sore impatient,
And said to him : ' But whither wouldst be gone ? '
Nathless he gan him forth, and journeying on
Came to a certain church of Saint Lawrence,
Perched on a mountain, and, not far from thence,
A ruined village, left forlorn of men.
The people of that country bore, as then,
No reverence for the friars, nor was their name
Known in the region : for which cause the same
Had not their needs replenished. Furthermore,
At the said time there was a famine sore,
But all the hope of Brother Giles was stayed
Upon our Lord. A three days' tarriance made
He and his fellows there ; and, a great snow
Falling on earth, by no means durst they go
Forth from the place. And, seeing they could not
win
Their bread by labour, nor by alms therein,

As was his wont, he to his fellow said :
‘ Now, Brother, summon we our Lord to aid,
And in a loud voice crave of Him that He
Vouchsafe in our so great necessity
Be pitiful to us ! ’ And therewithal
He cited an ensample to recall
How certain monks, who were in bitter case,
With a good courage prayed our Lord for grace,
And He gave ear to them. ‘ So, even as they,
We in like fashion to our Lord must pray
“ Have pity on us ! ” ’ And for their misery
They reverently besought a remedy.
And our Lord, who is pitiful and kind,
Heeding their faith’s devotion, put in mind
A man, who wist not any lodged therein,
Unto the selfsame village for to win.
So to himself he said : ‘ I will e’en fare
Unto Saint Lawrence’ Church, if haply there
Be of God’s gentlefolk,’ and went in fine,
And therewithal took with him bread and wine.
Then, seeing they were so sore bestead, they prayed
The man, who thither came, vouchsafe his aid,
For our Lord’s love, to their necessity ;
And he, by inspiration from on high,
With tenderest pity moved, did bread provide
To fill their need through all that Lenten tide.
And Brother Giles, perceiving that this thing
Did of our Lord’s grace and compassion spring,
Spake to his fellow : ‘ Brother, we have prayed
Our Lord thus far that He would grant us aid.

And have been heard of Him in our distress:
Now it behoves us render thanks no less,
And pray for those that be our alms-bringers.'
So day and night for them they offered prayers,
And for all Christian folk. And our Lord shed
Such grace on Brother Giles, that many, led
By his ensample, did the world forsake,
And of our holy Rule the habit take.
The remnant, who might naught attain hereto,
At home for our Lord's love did penance do.

XIV

HOW HE CHID THE SLOTHFUL
BROTHERS, WHO PREACHED, BUT
PRACTISED NOT

E'EN as from slaggardy himself he fled,
So thereof others he admonishèd
Full sharply: and, sith many a man he knew
Who preached the doctrine that he shunned to do,
Would say: 'If thou dost practise the good deed
Thou know'st and preachest, great shall be thy
meed.

He, that within his vineyard thee receives
To gather grapes, doth not forbid the leaves.
Better a million times 'twill thee bestead
To teach thyself than all the world,' he said.
'Bow the head oft, wouldst thou much wisdom
ken;

A peerless preacher is the meek of men:
And what is meekness? freely to allow
Their due to others. In preaching do not thou
Too much, too finely, or too roughly, speak,
But hit the mean.' Anon: 'Tis far to seek
From flying to feeding bird,' he said and sighed.

Once Brother Giles unto a man replied,
Who seemed to boast him of his lore: 'If all
The earth to one man's heritage should fall,
And he not tilled it, what fruit would he win?

And to another a small plot, wherein
For self and neighbour he task well the plough,
Would he not reap thereof ? So trust not thou
Thy lore : for were the lore of the whole earth
Thine, and untill'd of thee, 'twere nothing worth.'

XV

HOW IT BEHOVETH MEN TO WORK
WORTHILY, AND SERVE GOD

A CERTAIN lord, his labouring folk hard by,
 One time was standing in his vineyard nigh
 The place where Brother Giles was sojourning,
 When he 'gan chide them for much parleying ;
 Saying : ' Work, work, nor be so rife of word !'
 And Brother Giles, this utterance having heard,
 In fervour of soul did from the chapel stride,
 And ' Hark ye, Brother-pulpiters,' he cried,
 ' " Work, work," quoth this man, " " nor so word-rife
 be ! " '

Another time, ' Religious ship,' quoth he,
 ' Is split in twain ; let him escape who can !'
 Yea, once so high the tide of fervour ran,
 That ' Paris, Paris,' he exclaimed, ' why, why,
 Saint Francis' Order dost thou do to die ? '

Chancing a quail's note and a dove's to hear,
 Once quoth the Saint : ' O quail, my lady dear,
 Fain would I thee come hearken, the Lord's praise
 Rehearsing—fain be mindful of thy lays ;
 For not " there there " thou sayest, but " here
 here " ;
 As if thou'dst say " here and not otherwhere
 Work and be worthy, where thy lot is thrown " :
 O sister-dove, how beauteous is thy moan ! '

A certain friar there came to him one day,
Saying the Brothers did such labour lay
Upon him, that he gat no time for prayer:
And therefore craved he liberty to fare
Unto a hermitage, wherein to bide,
And serve our Lord more calmly. He replied:
' If thou shouldest to the king of France, and pray
A thousand pounds of him, would he not say:
" Sure thou art mad ! or what hast wrought for me,
That I a thousand pounds should give to thee ? "
But if a man some mighty deed had done
Aforetime in his service, such an one
Might boldly crave his bounty. So too thou,
Wouldst ask and have, must first to labour bow:
For one deed, done for others, doth obtain
More merit than for thine own pleasure twain.'
Withal he said to him: ' Was once a wight
Who had nor hands, nor feet, nor eyeballs' sight,
To whom another came, and " What," saith he,
" Wouldst give, should one restore thy hands to
thee ? "
" No less than all my substance," he replies:
" And what to him who should illume thine eyes ? "
" Him all my life-days would I serve full fain."
See now, my Brother,' quoth the Saint again,
' Thee doth our Lord with eyes, hands, feet, endow—
All bodily goods and ghostly—yet wouldest thou
Not serve Him.'

Once a Brother asked how he
So spiritual and devout of life could be:

And Brother Giles replied : ‘ Why doth one field
More plenteous increase than his neighbour’s yield ?
Because forsooth the tiller of this soil
More carefully hath tilled it, with more toil,
Than hath its lord the other. Therewithal,
Full many a blow must on the anvil fall,
Or ere the iron unto perfection fit
The shape whereto the craftsman willeth it :
And, as an idler, without toil or pain
Wouldst thou to sovereignty of soul attain ? ’

A Brother told him he had ofttimes striven
For grace, which nathless ne’er to him was given :
And Brother Giles replied : “ Who in this power
Hath all things, He may give thee as thy dower
To-morrow what to-day He doth deny. ”

Again, a Brother said : ‘ How can I fly
Temptation ? ’ ‘ From temptation,’ he replies,
‘ Who flieth, he from life eternal flies.
For no man shall be crowned, save him alone,
Who in this world hath loyal battle done. ’

XVI

HOW BROTHER GILES SAW CERTAIN
BROTHERS SUFFERING TOR-
MENTS IN HELL

A BROTHER, whom a trance had ravishèd,
Came joyfully to Brother Giles, and said :
‘ Father, good news I bring thee ; I have been
In vision rapt to hell, and there have seen
No Minor Brother.’ Brother Giles replied :
‘ I trow full well that thou hast none espied,
Full well I trow it.’ And, as that word he spoke,
Himself too was entranced, and, when he woke,
This Brother asked him, as his ghostly sire,
‘ Think’st thou there be no Brothers in hell-fire ?
Else, if there be, wherefore beheld I none ? ’
And, as from God, he answered : ‘ Therefore, son,
Thou saw’st them not, because thou didst not win
To the full depth of that abyss wherein
Suffer those hapless ones, who, without deed
Or Rule’s observance, wore the holy weed. .
For, as the saintly Brothers with the blest
Of heaven, their fellows, in great glory rest,
So with their fellow-sinners, housed of hell,
The sinful Brothers in sore anguish dwell.’

XVII

CONCERNING HIS MORTIFICATION
OF THE FLESH

Now Brother Giles would ever mortify
His flesh to serve the spirit, and thereby
The flower of purity did taintless hold.
For, as quoth Brother Gratian, of old
His most devout companion, he but ate
Once, and that sparingly, and when day was late.
For 'As the beast that loveth dung, e'en so
Our flesh is: flesh is champion of the Foe:
Yea, like the swine that hasteth to the mire,
Wherein to wallow is his one desire,
Such is the flesh,' he said. Another time
A Brother asking how from carnal crime
To guard us, Brother Giles replied: ' Whoe'er
Or a great stone, or a great beam, would bear,
Needs more of craft than force to hale it by.
Like to a mirror clear is chastity,
Which by a breath is dimmed. A man may not
Come to close fellowship with God, I wot,
If in things carnal be his heart's delight:
For, turn them up or down, to left or right,
Naught else but filth and loathliness thou'l see.'
' Of all the virtues, chastity for me ! '
One time he cried. Whereat a friar did say:
' But is not charity more great perfay ? '

And Brother Giles replied: 'What is more chaste
Than charity?' And ofttimes, as he paced
Singing, would chant: 'O sacred chastity,
What art thou? such thou art, so great and high
Of quality and stature, that no whit
Can fools discern of thee.' 'What call you it—
This chastity?' one time a Brother spake:
And Brother Giles thereto did answer make:
'This call I chastity—the senses all
In ward, with God for warder, to enthral.'
And, as he thus praised chastity, up-spoke
A wedded wight: 'Lo! from all woman-folk
I hold, save one: mine own sufficeth me.'
And he made answer: 'Seemeth it to thee,
In his own tavern drinking to excess,
A man thereby commits not drunkenness?'

XVIII

OF HIS EXCEEDING PURE CHASTITY

ONCE on a time a woman's voice he heard
 That called him ; and thereat within him stirred
 Such sore temptation of the flesh, as ne'er
 Aforetime had he proven. Howsoe'er,
 Perceiving it to be the devil's trick,
 Back to his orisons he hied full quick,
 With rigorous fasts and cruel stripes, whereby
 He gat good quittance of his enemy.

A certain Brother-priest was once beset
 With very grievous temptings, and, while yet
 Him seemed that naught might oust them, with a sigh
 To his own heart he said : ' Would God that I
 Could seek out Brother Giles, and to him tell
 This my temptation ! ' But, for he did dwell
 Too far aloof, he gat not leave to go
 And speak with him. And, as he slumbered, lo !
 The saint was in his vision, and much aid
 He had from him, and solace ; for he said :
 ' How with a dog wouldst deal, that made at thee
 To bite thee ? ' ' I should strike, to make him flee,'
 He answered. And the Saint bespake him : ' Go,
 And do with thy temptation even so ! '
 Who, strengthened thus with solace and good rede,

Prayed Brother Giles with our Lord intercede
 For him. And, when from slumber he awoke,
 That Brother of the said temptation's yoke
 Felt wholly lightened, as he certified
 To Brother Giles' companion. Some beside,
 Who, tempted their religious vows to spurn,
 Back to the world were minded to return,
 Won by his ceaseless warnings ofttimes owed
 To Brother Giles deliverance. On the road
 A man, who did a woman walking spy,
 One time was tempted, and, as he drew nigh,
 Felt goadings of the flesh, but, with great strength
 Resisting, looked not, and, come close at length
 Looked, and, beholding her that she was old,
 Lost the temptation: which when he was told,
 Quoth Brother Giles: 'Nay, dear my friend, I ween
 Thou hast lost the battle: better hadst thou been
 Fired with temptation, and not looked at her!'

With Brothers Ruffino once and Juniper
 And Simon being assembled, Brother Giles
 Asked them: 'How deal ye with the tempter's wiles
 Touching the flesh?' And Brother Ruffino said:
 'On God and eke on Mary, blessed Maid,
 I call, and cast me to the earth a spell.'
 And Brother Giles replied: 'I take thee well.'
 Next bade he Brother Simon to confess;
 Who answered: 'Of the sin's foul hideousness
 And work o' the flesh I fall a-pondering,
 And thus do rid me of the tempter's sting.'
 'I take thee well,' quoth Brother Giles, 'and thou.

O Brother Juniper ? ' He answered : ' How ?
" Go, get ye hence," I greet them, soon as spied ;
" The house is taken." ' Brother Giles replied :
' I hold with thee the safer course is so,
Touching this sin—to fly, not fight, the foe.'

XIX

OF HIS VOLUNTARY POVERTY

Now Brother Giles a mighty zealot was
Of poverty, and for the selfsame cause
With but one tunic was content, and stayed
In a poor cell of mud and wattles made,
And all excess did in abhorrence hold.
And once of Brother Elias hearing told
How at Assisi he was building fair
A church full large and sumptuous, and had there
A marble box where they the money kept
For the said work—hearing thereof, he wept
Full piteously, and thus brake forth in speech :
‘ Had I a house so spacious as would reach
Hence to Assisi, ‘twould suffice me well
In a small nook of one full small to dwell ’ ;
Then unto Brother Leo spake and said
Weeping : ‘ If thou be numbered with the dead,
Go, break this marble box, which to contain
Men’s offerings for yon vast and sumptuous fane
In holy poverty’s despite is set :
But, if thou liv’st, let be, for ill the fret
Couldst bear of Brother Elias.’ At which word
This Brother Leo waxed mighty in the Lord,
And with a Brother’s aid the box did break.
And Brother Giles, this done, for reverence’ sake
Toward Saint Francis, there to quit his vows,

Unto Assisi went: and through the House
Anon the Brothers led him, and displayed
The sumptuous buildings they had reared and made,
As though they gloried in them: the which gear
Well pondering, Brother Giles exclaimed: ' Give ear,
My Brothers ! I tell you naught is here amiss,
Save that ye have no womankind.' At this
The Brothers were sore offended, and did take
The word in dudgeon. But again he spake:
' Well wot ye, Brothers, that ye are e'en as free
From chastity as poverty to flee;
Since therefore poverty ye thus put by,
Why not as well be done with chastity ?'

XX

HOW BROTHER GILES DISPELLED
 THE DOUBTS OF A PREACHER
 CONCERNING THE VIRGINITY OF
 OUR LADY

A MIGHTY master of the Brotherhood
 Of preachers many a year, it chanced, had stood
 In sore doubt touching the virginity
 Of the blest Mother of Jesu Christ, Mary
 The Virgin. A hard matter seemed in troth
 This, that the blessed Virgin should be both
 Mother at once and maid. Of the said doubt
 Nathless it grieved him: so he cast about
 For some enlightened spirit to win him free,
 And hearing tell of Brother Giles that he
 With light was gifted to the uttermost,
 Set forth to seek him. And the Holy Ghost
 To Brother Giles his journey and intent
 And strife of soul revealing, he too went
 Along the way to meet him, and, while yet
 Each drew toward the other, ere they met,
 Bespake him, striking with his staff the earth,
 'O Brother preacher, Virgin ere the birth!'
 And, where he struck, a lily fair and tall
 From out the ground sprang straightway. There-
 withal

A second time he smote it, and did say :
‘ O Brother, Virgin on the bearing-day ! ’
And, as at first, a second lily sprang.
A third time striking, from his lips out-rang :
‘ O Brother preacher, Virgin after birth ! ’
And, as he spake, a third up-sprang from earth.
Which done, of a sudden without stop or stay
Departed Brother Giles upon his way ;
And the said Brother, there and then released
Of his temptation, from all doubting ceased.

XXI

HOW BROTHER GILES AND LOUIS
KING OF FRANCE MET, AND
EACH OF OTHER DISCERNED
THE HEART'S SECRETS

SAINT LOUIS, King of France, was minded well
To visit holy shrines, and, hearing tell
Of Brother Giles' great sanctity, anon
Resolved in heart to seek him. Whereupon,
Arrived Perugia, to the Brothers' home
He as a pilgrim with few folk did come,
And asked for Brother Giles right urgently.
To him then straightway did the porter hie,
Saying a pilgrim stood before the gate,
Asking to see him. Now who thus did wait
He through the Holy Spirit wist full well.
So with all speed he gat him from his cell,
And to the outer door ran forth in haste.
And there they kissed each other and embraced
With marvellous devotion, knee to knee
Bending, as though long time familiarly
Each had been known to other: and, shewing thus
Of their great love the token marvellous,
They parleyed not together nor had speech,
But in unbroken silence each from each
Parted. And when Saint Louis went his way,
His fellows bid a certain Brother say

Who it had been that in such loving wise
Did Brother Giles embrace. And he replies
That it was Louis, of fair France the King,
Who fain, his pilgrimage accomplishing,
Would visit Brother Giles. Thereat were they
Sore vexèd with the saint, and 'gan to say
Among themselves, complaining: 'Tell us why,
O Brother Giles, unto a king so high
As is the King of France, who came to see
And haply hearken some good word of thee,
Thou spak'st no word at all ?' He answerèd:
'Marvel not, dear my Brothers, that we said
Naught to each other; for the light divine
Of heavenly wisdom shewed his heart to mine,
So soon as we embraced, and mine to his.
And in that mirror which eternal is,
Sith every thought stood imaged clear as day
That I to him, or he to me, would say,
Without the office of word, lips, or tongue,
A deeper solace in our soul up-sprung
Than if we had spoken: nay, had we so willed,
The utterance of the thoughts, that in us thrilled,
Had wrought discomfort rather. Sooth to say,
The king with wondrous solace went his way.'

XXII

OF THE COUNSEL WHICH HE GAVE
TO BROTHER JAMES

JAMES of La Massa, he that served the part
Of a lay Brother, was full pure of heart ;
Companion of Saint Clare, and comrade he
To divers of Saint Francis' company.
And, sith he had this grace, to be at whiles
Rapt from the body, fain of Brother Giles
Would he take counsel, and by him be taught
How in receiving the said grace he ought
To act and bear him : who replied in few :
'Diminish naught therefrom, add naught thereto,
And shun the crowd, so far as in thee lies.'
Quoth he 'What meanest thou ?' and he replies :
'Wheras man's thought is ushered to the height
Where dwells of grace divine the glorious light,
It must e'en shun through pride or negligence
To add thereto, or diminish aught from thence,
And labour to love solitude, that so
The said grace safely may abide and grow.'

XXIII

OF THE COUNSEL WHICH HE GAVE
TO A BROTHER CONCERNING
THAT WHICH IS MOST PLEASING
TO GOD

A BROTHER once to Brother Giles did kneel,
Imploring him beseech our Lord reveal
What he might do to pleasure Him the most ;
Whom thus next morn did Brother Giles accost :
' I will e'en tell thee, but would chant the way ' ;
So took his staff, and made as if to play
Upon a viol, while these words alone—
' One unto one,' he sang, ' one unto one,'
Over and over, saying to him : ' So do,
And thou shalt please God.' Since the Brother knew
No whit, he vowed, the meaning of that word,
Quoth Brother Giles again : ' Wouldst please the Lord,
Lo ! without pause or paltering, as is fit,
One soul to one God give thou and commit.'

XXIV

OF THE COUNSEL WHICH HE GAVE
TO BROTHER GRATIAN

To Brother Giles did Brother Gratian say,
Speaking of God, as ever was his way :
' To preach and counsel others well I wot,
But how to act, meseems this know I not ;
Yea, and albeit a many things I know,
Which best behoves me naught have I to shew,
Nor by what doing most may please our Lord.
Wherefore of that thou deem'st vouchsafe me word ;
What thinkest thou ? ' Quoth Brother Giles : ' No
way
Wilt thou please God so well as this perfay,
That by the neck thou hang thyself aloft.'
And Brother Gratian urgently and oft
Beseeching him this riddle to declare,
At last he answered : ' He that hangs in air,
Though not in heaven, is raised from earth with eyes
Cast ever downward. So do thou likewise.
For thou, though not in heaven, from things of earth
Mayst rise, and busy thee with things of worth,
And of thyself think humbly, and though late,
For our Lord's pity still in patience wait.'

XXV

OF THE COUNSEL WHICH HE GAVE
TO ONE WHO WOULD ENTER
THE LIFE RELIGIOUS

A MAN once said to Brother Giles that he
The holy life would enter finally :
Who answered him : ' If thither thou wouldest win,
Go quickly, slay thy parents, brothers, kin.'
But in amaze, hands clasped, with tears that well,
' O Brother Giles,' he cried, ' a deed so fell—
How could I do it ? ' And thus did he respond :
' Thou babe in understanding, art so fond
And dull of wit, as deem that I thee bade
Hereby to murder them with mortal blade ?
Nay, but with mental, and in thought, I wot.
For father, mother, whoso hateth not,
That is, who not forsaketh—know that he
Of Jesu Christ can ne'er disciple be.'

XXVI

OF THE COUNSEL WHICH HE GAVE
TO A BROTHER-COOK CONCERN-
ING MURMURS MADE AGAINST
HIM

A BROTHER-COOK was once right ill at ease
For that he could not in his cooking please
The tastes of all the Brothers, though alway
He strove his best, so far as in him lay ;
But one wished this thing, and another that ;
Until to Brother Giles at last he gat
For counsel in these matters, if so be
He might in patience bear him peaceably.
And Brother Giles made answer : ' Go, my son,
And whensoe'er thou hear'st from anyone
" This cooking is ill-seasoned," stir it round
Once, and exclaim : " 'Tis worth a hundred pound."
So shalt thou ever foil them, and so pray
Still to be challenged in the selfsame way.'

XXVII

HOW HE ANSWERED TWO CARDINALS WHO ASKED HIM FOR HIS PRAYERS

Two Cardinals to Brother Giles once came
To hear the Word of Life ; and when the same
Would now take up their journey, they 'gan plead
He would vouchsafe with God to intercede
In prayer for them. But he made answer : ' Nay,
What need, my lords, that I for you should pray,
Who have more faith, and eke more hope, than I ! '
' How so ? ' said they : ' Because,' he made reply,
' Whate'er of riches, honour, and success,
This world can offer, ye indeed possess,
And hope to win salvation ; whereas I,
Despite all hardship and adversity,
Fear to be lost hereafter.' By which word
Upbuilded they to better aims. were stirred.

XXVIII

HOW HE COMFORTED A BROTHER
TORMENTED WITH TEMPTATION

A FRIAR, fast holden of temptation's net,
Oft prayed our Lord to loose him, but as yet
Had earned scant answer ; whereupon he hied
To Brother Giles for counsel, who replied :
' Marvel not, Brother, if our Lord it please
That still thou fight against His enemies,
Who hast received such grace of Him. For lo !
On whom the King doth costlier arms bestow,
Him would he have fight bavelier.'

One time too

A Brother asked him : ' What thing can I do
That I be fain my orisons to pay ?
For hard of heart I feel, and loth to pray.'
And he made answer thus : ' The King, I wot,
Hath servants twain, one armed, the other not,
Whom both he bade go fight his enemies.
But he, which had no armour, on this wise
Bespeak his lord : " Sir, as thou seest, I have
No armour, but for thy love's sake will brave,
Thus without arms, the battle." And the King,
His servant's loyal faith considering,
Said to his ministers : " Go ye, prepare

Good harness for my faithful knight to wear,
And arm, and deck him with my arms' device." "
So, be a man's heart dry, hard, cold as ice,
Touching devotion, let him nathless dare
March boldly to the battle-field of prayer.'

XXIX

HOW BROTHER GILES ANSWERED
ONE WHO CRAVED COUNSEL AS
TO ENTERING THE LIFE RE-
LIGIOUS

WHEN one by Brother Giles would counselled be
Of entering the religious life, quoth he :
' If a poor man should know where treasure lay
Hid in a field, would he crave counsel, say,
Whether to go and take it ? Much more vain
To wait on others' counsel to attain
The realm of heaven, that hath no bound assigned.'
By the which warning he, resolved in mind,
Left all his worldly substance, and straightway
Entered the life religious.

On a day
There came to Brother Giles, as it befell,
A certain friar who said : ' If I do well,
I glory in't ; if evil, then and there
Fall into sadness and, as like, despair.'
' Rightly thy sin thou ruest,' answered he,
' Yet temperately repent, bethinking thee
That our Lord's power doth more avail herein
To pardon, than thy wretchedness to sin.
Lo ! should some tiller of the furrowed plain
Say to himself, or ere he cast the grain,
" If now thou sowest, or bird of heaven, or beast

O' the field, will come and make thereof his feast,"
He would sow never. But, who would fill his bin,
Now soweth, and hereafter gathers in
Enough for his own need. Through fear of pride
Cease not moreover from good works,' he cried,
'Sith ever the more part will stay by thee.'

A wise man coming to him once, said he :
'Thinkest thou the gifts of God are great ?' 'Yea,
yea,
Surely,' he cried. And Brother Giles did say :
'These words, thou'l find for grace do more avail
Within Religion, than outside the pale.'

XXX

HOW GRACE AVAILETH MORE WITH-
IN RELIGION THAN OUTSIDE
THE PALE

ONE asked of Brother Giles : ' Who hath his place
Within the world—can he of God find grace ? '

Quoth Brother Giles : ' Full surely ; yet to me
More dear would one grace in religion be,
Than ten i' the world. The grace religion gives
Is lightly guarded, look you, for who lives
Religious, of earth's turmoil hath no share,
Dwelling aloof from fret of worldly care,
Which is a foe to grace. The monks also
With loving exhortation, and fair show
Of holy converse, draw apart from ill,
And unto godly works provoke the will,
And kindle. But what grace the world may give
Is lightly lost ; and, howsoe'er he strive,
Scarce may one keep it. Care for worldly good,
The which is mother to disquietude,
Hinders of grace the sweetness, and defiles ;
And other worldlings with persuasive wiles,
And through corrupt ensample, as perforce
And violently, withdraw from virtue's course,
And drive a man, constraining him to ill.

For one, who bears him honestly, they will
In no wise aid, but mock at and misprise ;
While, as for such as are God's enemies,
They chide not, but extol them. Better, then,
One grace held safe, than at great peril ten.'

XXXI

OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE OF
BROTHER GILES, AND HOW HE
WAS RAPT FROM THE BODY

AFTER his deedful life's laborious span,
And time's shrewd buffets, changed to perfect man,
Our Lord translated him henceforth to live
In calm repose the life contemplative.
So in the sixth year sith his vows were plighted,
At Fabrione's hermitage, one night,
Nigh to Perugia, the Lord's hand was laid
Upon him, as full fervently he prayed ;
And with so vast a solace was he filled,
As certified him that our Lord had willed—
So plain the hidden things of Christ he saw—
His soul from out the body's frame to draw.
There at that moment he 'gan realize
In his own person how the body dies,
First at the feet, then upward without stay,
Till his soul issued from her house of clay.
And when, returning to its mortal mate,
That saintly spirit came to contemplate
The eternal secrets, naught would he disclose,
But said : ' Thrice blessed is the man who knows
The mysteries of God, for naught is hid
That shall not, even as our Lord shall bid,
And when it pleases Him, to light be brought.

Certes in mine own self confide I naught ;
Therefore, if these things must revealèd be,
Be they revealed by others than by me ! '
And, sith the enemy of human kind
Doth more molest the man of perfect mind
Than others, after the aforesaid grace
Vouchsafed him, soon and in the selfsame place,
Whenas, prayer ended, he his cell had sought,
Came to his side, a form with horror fraught,
Satan the devil. And such vast dismay
Seized Brother Giles, that no word might he say,
But casting him to earth did straight beseech
Our Lord in spirit, sith his tongue lacked speech,
To hear him. And anon deliverance came.
Right soon he asked Saint Francis of the same :
' Father, is aught so fell that none might face
The fear on't for a paternoster's space ? '
And the thrice blessed Francis answered : ' None
Might brook the devil's form to gaze upon,
While half a paternoster might be said ;
But, save that he were holpen of God's aid,
The man must die.' And Brother Giles, as who
Himself had proved the thing, believed it true.

XXXII

HOW AT THE FIRST THE BLESSED
FRANCIS APPEARED TO HIM,
AND AFTERWARDS WITH BODILY
EYES HE SAW OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST

ONE time when Brother Giles with his fellow
Unto Cetona's hermitage did go,
Where in the bishopric of Chiusi dwell
The Brothers of Cittobolo, befell
That the next night appeared before his eyes
The Emperor, and in most familiar wise
Entreated him ; which verily, said he,
Was token of the grace and ecstasy
That should befall him, as appeared anon :
For when to the said hermitage he won,
And there Saint Martin's fast of forty days
Was duly keeping, flashed before his gaze
My lord Saint Francis, whom he did beseech :
'Father, I would that thou and I have speech
Together.' Quoth Saint Francis : ' Verily
Search thine own heart, wouldest thou have speech of
me.'

Thereafter, as he happed within his cell
Holding night-vigil for three days, ere fell
Our Lord's nativity, before him there
Appeared Christ Jesu, as he strove in prayer

And fervour of devotion ; whom he saw
With bodily eyes : and, from his words to draw
What then he witnessed, on the spirit's eye
There flashed, outsplendouring mere mortality,
Something ineffable which he nor dar'd
Nor had the skill to utter. Afterward,
Whenas this wondrous vision was o'er-sped,
As 'twere some other, of himself he said :
‘ ‘Tis writ Saint Paul was rapt, but in or out
Of his own body he himself did doubt :
But I know one who in the flesh did see
God plainly.’ Once too without figure he
Spake of himself the same—to wit, that erst
He had had faith, and in a rapture first
Had lost it, no whit doubting whether in
Or out o' the body. And, as he did win
To the said vision, sudden he was filled
With odour sweet ineffably distilled,
And ecstasy of heart that might not be
Sustained for weakness of humanity.
Then deeming that to very death he bowed,
As swooning to his end, he cried aloud,
So that the Brothers of the monastery
Had grievous doubt that he would straightway die ;
In the which terror one among them hied,
And unto Brother Giles' companion cried :
‘ Prithee come quick ere Brother Giles be dead ! ’
Who therewith rose and ran to him, and said :
‘ What ails thee, Father ? ’ ‘ I but yearned,’ quoth
he,

‘ To look upon thy face ’ : for tenderly
He loved and trusted him, whom he had led
From childhood in the ways of godlihead.
To him then he revealed from first to last
All that had happed to him ; and, that day past,
Next morn the Brother of himself did go
To Brother Giles, and found him full of woe,
And weeping, and from sorrow bade refrain,
Lest that thereby his body waste and wane.
To whom the Saint made answer : ‘ How should I
Not weep, who doubt I am God’s enemy ?
For certes such compassion He hath showed
To-me-ward, and so great a gift bestowed,
I doubt my works accord not with His will.’
So spake he, brooding on the vision still,
Whereby his heart so mightily was moved.
‘ Therefore,’ he added, ‘ heretofore I raved
Where’er I would, and did what I would do,
Still labouring with my hands : now all is new,
And I must act e’en as I feel the power ;
Whereof I fear lest any from this hour
Ask of me that I skill not to bestow.’
Then said his fellow : ‘ Father, sure enow
Right good it is that aye thou hast in thee
The fear of God ; yet shouldst thou trust that He,
Who to His servant doth grace manifold
Vouchsafe to have, vouchsafeth grace to hold.’
Which answer liked the man of God full well :
And solace of the soul unutterable,
From the third day of our Lord’s birth-vigil

E'en to the coming of the Kings, did still
Enfold him ; yet not ever in one stay.
But divers seasons both of night and day ;
Sith in good sooth man's frailty may not bear
For long so fierce a radiance ; with which fear
He prayed our Lord its heady force refrain,
Unmeet for him, a simple man and plain.
But, in like measure as himself he found
Unworthy, so did our Lord's grace abound
In power upon him. Wherefore he would say
That even as on the Apostles He that day
Did breathe the Holy Ghost, e'en so bequeathed,
On him at last the Holy Ghost He breathed.

XXXIII

OF A SPLENDOUR THAT FELL FROM
HEAVEN BETWEEN BROTHER
GILES AND HIS COMPANION

ONE night, as Brother Giles before his cell
With his companion parleyed, lo ! there fell
A splendour from our Lord their forms between :
And, when his fellow asked what it might mean,
'Take thou no heed,' he answered, 'let it pass.'
There too a good man of religion was,
To whom our Lord did once His secrets show.
He, ere to Brother Giles this happened so,
Saw in a dream that, where was set his cell,
The sun arose, and ran his course, and fell.
Thereafter, seeing Brother Giles, he said :
'Sunlike his beams o'er all the world are shed.'

XXXIV

HOW SOON AFTER THE VISION
BROTHER GILES WAS RAPT IN SOUL

Now when the aforesaid vision he had seen,
Oft rapt in soul was Brother Giles, I ween,
And much alone, and seldom from his cell
Would issue forth, the rather to guard well
The grace of God vouchsafed him. There, I say,
He would remain to watch and fast and pray,
And idle converse utterly would shun,
And murmurings: therewithal, if any one
Spake evil of another, he would say:
'I list not hear of others' faults perfay;
But guard thee, Brother, guard thee, lest thou wound
Thy conscience.' Yea, God's gifts did so abound
Upon him, as might not be hid from sight:
For if of God spake any, or the light
Of divine glory, or sweet Paradise,
Straight was he rapt, remaining on this wise
In the same place full long, and feeling naught.
Yea, and if hinds or children, thither brought
By others, should cry 'Paradise,' right soon,
Hearing that name, he fell into his swoon.
So when the Brothers fain with him would talk,
Name Paradise they durst not, lest he balk
Their purpose, being lost in ecstasy.
So too familiar converse he would fly,

And not alone with lay-folk, but with all—
Brothers alike and clerks canonical :
‘Sith to soul-saving lies a surer way
Among few folk than many,’ he would say ;
‘And who his own soul’s welfare tendeth best
Best tendeth eke the welfare of the rest.’
Thereto, ‘By one small negligence,’ he said,
‘Or other fault, man oft hath forfeited
Great grace, which after he may not regain :
E’en as from dicers may be proven plain,
Who, playing but for a single point, may come
To lose the matter of a mighty sum.’

The things whereof thou tellest.' 'Yea, certes,'
The saint made answer, 'mighty things were
these.'

Quoth Brother Andrew, 'Where did this betide ?'
'That, which thou seest, thou seest,' the Saint
replied,

'And that, thou hearest, hearest.' And there fell
Such rapture on his soul, he might not well
Contain him. Then did Brother Andrew say :
'Tell me, hast thou ne'er been at Chiusi ?' 'Nay,'
Quoth Brother Giles, 'but all the country round
Well know I, nor in all the world have found
Aught like the mount Alvernia.' 'This, I ween,
Were wondrous, if an angel should be seen
By any,' quoth the other. 'Now at thee
I marvel, Brother Andrew, for let be
Angels, Archangels, earth and heaven, were not,
Nor any thing created, yet no jot
The less for that were Majesty Divine.

This then, methinks, would be a mighty sign—
Our Lord's appearing.' Brother Andrew said :
'Where such great things our Lord accomplished,
Would that a church might stand, to mark the
same !'

Quoth Brother Giles, 'Well spoken !' 'And what
name,'

Asked Brother Andrew, 'should beseem it most ?'
The man of God made answer : 'Pentecost.'
Thereafter Brother Andrew did inquire :
'Think'st thou the Holy Ghost in form of fire

Hath been to eye of man made visible,
Since in the Apostles' time He came to dwell
In form as tongues of fire ?' And he replied :
' If by myself myself be glorified,
Naught, look you, is my glory ' : and anon :
' Let us no longer parley hereupon,
Nor of this matter.' Which he said perchance
Lest in his presence he be rapt in trance.
Once too quoth Brother Giles : ' Four times have I
Been born—first of my mother ; secondly
I' the sacrament of baptism ; again
The third time when I gat me forth from men
Unto religion ; fourthly when our Lord
Of boundless pity did such sign afford
By His appearing.' Therewithal anon
Said Brother Andrew : ' Should I get me gone
To foreign lands, and one inquired of me
If thee I knew, and how it happed with thee,
I might make answer : " Thirty years and twain
Lived Brother Giles, ere born, and bid attain
Faith before birth, and after birth lost faith." '
And Brother Giles replied : ' As thy word saith,
So is it : nathless no faith had I before,
Such as behoved me have ; yet, less or more,
He hath withdrawn it ; and whoe'er,' he said,
' Should, as behoved, his faith have perfected,
From him would God withdraw it.' ' If then, I
ween,'
Said Brother Andrew, ' thou a priest hadst been,
How, celebrating Mass, wouldest say " Credo

In unum Deum" ? Methinks "One God I know"
Were, spoken by thy lips, the seemlier word.
And Brother Giles, this question having heard,
With a loud voice intoning it, e'en so
Made answer : 'One Almighty God I know.'

XXXVI

CONCERNING A VISION WHICH AP-
PEARED TO BROTHER ANDREW
OF BURGUNDY

Now Brother Andrew, who thus dwelt apart
With Brother Giles, was full devout of heart,
And prone to contemplation. And it fell
Upon a time, he praying in his cell,
Appeared before him one full fair to see,
A ruddy child ; by the which vision he
Was filled with utmost solace. So what time
He heard the chapel-bell for vespers chime,
Sore doubted he to join the Choir, or stay.
'And yet 'tis good the creature to obey
For love of who created him,' he said
Within himself, and so to Vespers sped,
And came again, and still within his cell
Found the fair child, who said to him: 'Know well,
Hadst thou not hied thee to the Choir, straightway
Must I have vanished from thine eyes to-day.'

XXXVII

HOW BROTHER GILES SPOKE TO
BONAVENTURA THE MINISTER-
GENERAL

To Bonaventura, Minister in chief,
Upon a time spake Brother Giles in brief :
' Full many a grace, and of His goodliest,
Hath God vouchsafed thee, Father. We, the rest,
Plain witless folk who lack sufficiency—
What can we do for to be saved ? ' Quoth he :
' Hath God vouchsafed no other grace to man
Save but to love Him as the learnèd can ?
But an old beldam may love God,' said he,
' More than a master in theology.'
Then Brother Giles in fervour of spirit hied
Into his garden on the city-side,
And 'gan cry out : ' O needy eld, that art
Simple, unlearn'd, love God with all thine heart,
And thou shalt mightier than our Master be—
Bonaventura.' And, so saying, for three
Long hours the saint stood rapt, immovable
In ecstasy : and oft it thus befell
That for a day's space three half-cubits high
He was from earth uplifted visibly.

XXXVIII

HOW BROTHER GILES WAS RAPT
IN THE PRESENCE OF DAME
JACQUELINE

ONCE, when he lodged Perugia's walls within,
A noble Roman dame, hight Jacqueline—
She who had erst Saint Francis loved so well—
Came for to see him. Afterward befell
That Brother Gerard, a man right spiritual,
Followed, and fain would from his lips hear fall
Some good ensamples ; and with him, I wis,
Came many Brothers ; yet no word but this
In homely parlance Brother Giles would say :
‘ A man may come, through that he can to-day,
To that he cannot nor hath will to do.’
And Brother Gerard answer made thereto,
Willing to lure him into further speech :
‘ I marvel, Brother Giles, a man should reach
To that he would not, through the thing he can ;
For be it plainly understood that man
Of his own power can naught, as prove I may
By many reasonings. Foremost I would say
Aught to have power must first have entity,
Sith that to act doth presuppose to be ;
And sith to inward essence act
Beareth similitude, as fire in fact

Gives heat by reason that itself is hot.
But of himself man nothing is, I wot,
Wherefore the Apostle saith : " Who boasts to be
Something, when he is nothing, verily
Deceiveth his own self." So then 'tis plain
Who nothing is can nothing. But again
I prove it thus : if men can aught at all,
Or through the soul alone it must befall,
Or through the body, or both joined in one.
Now man by virtue of the soul alone
Can naught, for soul, of body reft, doth earn
Nor merit nor demerit : so in turn
By virtue of mere body naught can be ;
For body, reft of soul, lacks utterly
Both life and form, nor can to act attain,
Sith every action is of form. Again,
Through fellowship betwixt them can he naught,
For this by virtue of the soul were wrought
Which is his form : but if, as we assert,
Soul, reft of body, be itself inert,
Much more 'tis so when with the body knit,
Whose gross corruption clogs and hampers it.
And hereof, Brother Giles, this sample take:
If, without load, an ass no way can make,
Much less will he when laden.' In such wise
Did Brother Gerard twelve-fold proof devise,
That the bystanders marvelled. Upon this
Quoth Brother Giles : ' Thou speakest all amiss,
Therefore confess thine error.' Whereupon
Smiling the other made confession.

But Brother Giles, seeing he did but feign,
Said : ' Thou confesest, but the words are vain,'
And further asked him : ' Canst thou sing ? ' And he
Thereto assenting, ' Come, then, sing with me.'
Then Brother Giles from out his sleeve did take
A harp of willow, such as children make,
Twelve-stringed, and striking on the first 'gan sing
In rhythmic words, and so from string to string
Annulling and confuting plea by plea
His twelve-fold argument. ' And first,' said he,
' I speak not of man's being, ere create,
But after his creation, in that state
Of free-will given of God, whereby he could
Earn merit by consenting to the good—
Consenting not, demerit. Here withal
Thou spak'st amiss to trick me, in that Paul
The nothingness of substance taught not there
Nor yet of power, but merit ; as elsewhere
" I nothing am if I lack charity."
Further, I spake not of the soul set free,
Or of the body dead, but living man,
Who, if he will, to grace consenting can
Good deeds accomplish, or, if he so will,
Defying grace accomplish deeds of ill,
Which is in sooth from good to fall away.
And, for thou say'st this body of decay
Weighs down the soul, the Scripture hath no voice
To teach that it can rob her of free choice
' Twixt good and ill—to sink or to aspire ;
But that her apprehension and desire

Is thereby hindered, while the memory clings
To idle traffic with corporeal things.

Whence too there follows in the selfsame place :

“ His earthly dwelling doth man’s sense abase
With manifold conceits ” ; by means whereof
His soul can seek not that which is above,
Where Jesu Christ at God’s right hand is set ;
For that the soul’s might through the busy fret
Of cares, and by the earth-bound body’s strength,
Still is drawn downward.’ So too, and at length,
He all his other pleadings did annul,
That once more Brother Gerard owned in full
His error. Then again spake Brother Giles :
‘ Wouldst now that I should show thee what at
whiles

The creature can ? ’ And with a fearsome cry
In likeness of one damned, full grievously,
That all who heard him trembled with affright,
‘ Ah me ! ’ he shrieked, ‘ ah me ! unhappy wight ! ’
Moaning and weeping. Then in other tone
Quoth Brother Giles : ‘ Tell me, thou woful one,
Wherefore art gone to hell ? ’ And his own voice
Made rueful answer : ‘ For that, having choice
To do the good which it behoved me do,
I nathless did it not, nor would eschew
The ill which eke was in my power to fly ;
For which cause am I damned eternally.’
Then, going to Brother Gerard, ‘ Hear’st thou, man,
That there is something which the creature can ? ’
Whereto he added : ‘ If a raindrop fall

Into the deep, doth it give name withal
To Ocean, or from Ocean take the same ? '
And he replied : ' In substance and in name
The raindrop is absorbed into the sea.'
Then Brother Giles before that company
Was straightway rapt. Full well he knew in fine
That human nature, which to the divine
Is but a drop, invisible, unheard,
Was through the incarnation of the Word
As in a mighty sea absorbed, to wit,
The Ocean of the Godhead's Infinite.

XXXIX

HOW BROTHER GILES WAS RAPT IN
PRESENCE OF THE POPE

WHEN holy Gregory, ninth Pope of the name,
One time unto Perugia's city came,
Hearing of Brother Giles things marvellous,
He sent to seek him ; who within the house
Now entering felt upon his spirit steal
Such sweetness as at times he wont to feel
Ere lost in ecstasy ; whereof afraid
Lest he be rapt before the Pope he bade
His fellow make excuse for him, as one
Who at that hour could come not : the which done,
That Brother to the Pope, demanding why,
Made answer : ' Brother Giles assuredly
Waiteth below, but, fearful to advance
Lest in thy presence he be rapt in trance,
Forbears to enter.' Then the holy Sire,
As who for sight of him had shrewd desire,
Gave swift commandment Brother Giles to bring.
But he, as soon as they 'gan parleying,
Stood rapt and motionless, eyes heavenward raised.
Whereat the holy Father was amazed,
And wist the things which he had heard were true,
Saying : ' If thou shouldst pass from mortal view
Before me, I shall wait no further sign
Ere in the roll of Saints I thee enshrine.'

XL

HOW THE POPE ASKED COUNSEL
OF BROTHER GILES, AS THEY
SAT AT MEAT TOGETHER

ONCE, when the holy Sire had thither hied
Where Brother Giles upon the mountain-side
Lodged nigh Perugia, rapt within his cell
The Brothers found him, and made haste to tell
The Pope, who following in their footsteps trod
Himself to gaze upon the man of God.
And seeing him thus lost in ecstasy,
When with the Cardinals who stood anigh
He had long marked him, the Pope went his way
Amazed and mournful in that he that day
Must lack the speech for which his heart did pine.
Wherefore himself did summon him to dine,
That he might talk at ease full leisurely.
So to the Pope's house Brother Giles did hie,
And entered and fell prostrate on his face,
Kissing his foot: and when with kind embrace
The Pope had greeted him, and friendly cheer,
One of the company who stood anear
Counselled the holy Sire to bid him sing:
Whereat the Pope, though inly wondering
If he had skill thereof, devoutly gave
Command that Brother Giles should chant a stave.
To whom the Saint made answer: 'O my Lord,

What wilt thou that I sing ?' And the said word
Repeating with great fervour, cry on cry,
Full swiftly through the palace he 'gan fly
As fain to hide him, then, to quietude
Returned, with one foot o'er the other stood
Rapt until Vespers : and, as testified
Both by the Pope and others at his side,
Nor voice, nor pulse, nor feeling, any more
Was in him. And the Pope, now grieving sore
To be so soon baulked of his parleying,
'Gan chide who charged him bid the Saint to sing.
And, Brother Giles continuing in his trance,
He said to those about him : ' By mischance
This man is lost to us ; but let us now
Make proof what virtue lies within the vow
Of his Obedience.' Therewithal this word
He spake to Brother Giles : ' The Pope is Lord
Of all the Minor Brothers, therefore thee
By holy Obedience I bid come to me.'
O marvel ! for the man who late did seem
Reft of all motion, housed within a dream,
Sprang straightway to the Pope with joyful cry,
And threw him at his feet repentantly,
Making confession of his fault. Anon
The Pope himself upraised him, whereupon
Quoth Brother Giles : ' Father, how is't with thee ? '
' Well, Brother,' quoth the holy Sire ; and he :
' How sore the burden, Father, thou dost bear !'
Meaning thereby the load of heavy care
That must perplex his spirit. Whereunto

The Pope made answer: 'That thou say'st is true,
 Wherefore I now beseech thee lend thine aid
 This load to lighten.' Which when he had said,
 Made answer Brother Giles: 'Right willingly
 I do submit me to my Lord's decree.'

Then quoth the Pope: 'Brother, thou say'st aright,
 "Thy yoke is easy, and thy burden light."'
 Whereat the Saint uprose as if to go,
 And parted from his side a space, and so
 Was rapt in spirit: and this from Vesper-bell
 E'en till a third part of the night befell:
 Which seeing, the holy Sire was sore amazed
 With those about him, and devoutly praised
 A life so holy, and, the following day
 Seeing the Saint himself again, bade lay
 Refection for them both, as friend with friend,
 In his own chamber. And when this had end,
 The holy Father asked familiarly:
 'Say, what shall come to pass concerning me? '
 And Brother Giles for utter humbleness
 Forbore to answer. Quoth the Pope nathless:
 'Say then at least what it behoves me be.'
 Then after a long time reluctantly
 And oft himself excusing he replies:
 'Behoves thee, holy Sire, to have two eyes,
 Both right and left—the right to contemplate
 High matters which pertain to sovereign state,
 The left of lowlier matters to take heed.'
 And, seeing the holy Father that indeed
 He served God truly, from that very day

He 'gan great love and reverence to him pay.
Ever this holy man was blithe and glad :
And if at any time he converse had
With folk about him touching any word
Spoken of old by Jesu Christ our Lord,
Filled with great joy devoutly would he kiss
The very earth and stones, performing this
With deep devotion ; for he counted it
A bitter thing his orisons to quit,
And for the needs of mere humanity—
Because forsooth the fitting hour drew nigh—
Return to eat : far liefer had he won
Refection of the leaves, that he might shun
Rather the company of men, than so
E'en for one hour the grace of God forgo.
And when with laud and blessing on God's name
Back to the Brothers blithe and glad he came,
'Nor tongue hath skill to utter,' he would say,
'Nor script express, nor heart of men portray,
What God for those that love Him hath in store.'
And sith devout faith in his heart he bore
And loyal worship, with right holy fear
He did the Church's sacraments revere
And all the Canon sanctions : and what time
He heard make mention of her rites sublime,
He would devoutly laud them with great cheer,
And say : 'O Church of Rome, our Mother dear,
Thy goodness passeth our poor wit to know :
The path of Life thou teachest, and dost shew
The way wherein who walketh shall not fall,

But mounteth unto glory.' Therewithal
He heard Mass willingly, and eke adored
And did partake the Body of our Lord
On Sundays and high festivals ; and when
He would receive the food that saveth men,
Or ere he took that blessed Sacrament,
Rising full early to the Church he went,
And rapt in holy meditation there
With our Lord Jesu Christ abode in prayer.

XLI

HOW WHILE SPEAKING OF GOD HE
WAS RAPT AND THERE SHONE
FORTH A MARVELLOUS LIGHT

WHEN Brother Giles was sojourning hard by
Perugia, as the wonted hour drew nigh,
Back to the Brothers he returned to eat
At eve: and after supper with such sweet
And high devotion of our Lord he spake,
As in all hearts the slumbering fire did wake
Of those who there were gathered. So at last
Into an ecstasy of soul he passed,
And thus abode till morn. When this had end,
Leaving the Brothers, townward he would wend,
But suddenly there flashed so fierce a light
That the moon's radiance, which still glittered bright
In the early dawn, seemed swallowed by the glow:
Which seeing, the Brothers—and good cause now—
Were sore amazed: to whom the man of grace,
Now parted from them but a little space,
Anon returned and for their comfort cries:
‘What if some great thing happed before your eyes?
But he that hath no mighty matter seen—
To him a little thing seems great, I ween.’

XLII

HOW THE ENEMY TEMPTED HIM TO
VAINGLORY

THE more the devils marked him mount and soar
Into God's hidden mysteries, the more
They strove to tempt and do him foul despite.
So, as he happed within his cell one night
Nigh to Perugia praying, they 'gan ask
One of another: 'Why doth he so task
His spirit, being e'en now a perfect Saint? '
Whereof the holy Brother did acquaint
His fellow, wondering what the same should mean,
Who answered: 'Heed it not, for this, I ween,
Was a temptation pricking thee to pride
And to vainglory.' Once it did betide,
As there beneath an olive-tree he lay,
A Brother asked him: 'Father mine, what say
The sages touching contemplation?' He,
Loth to be rapt, as he was wont to be
If any spake of glory, made reply,
As one who fain would put the question by:
'Sages thereof say many things: wouldst hear
How contemplation deth to me appear?
'Tis fire, 'tis unction, ecstasy of rest,
And glory.' The which utterance, so expressed
And from his bosom with such fervour sent,
Filled the said Brother with astonishment.

XLIII

OF HIS MARVELLOUS TEACHING AND
PRAISE OF CHASTITY

OFT Brother Giles would to his fellow say:
 ' That thy faith fail not I am wont to pray ;
 And when thyself thou shalt converted be,
 Strengthen thy Brethren. The which word,' said he,
 ' I thus interpret : in this mortal state
 A man must first upon his own soul wait,
 And afterward on others. And although
 To convert other souls please God enow,
 We must conceive it as for those alone
 Who by so doing hazard not their own,
 But freely may serve God in every place.'

A layman asked of Brother Giles this grace—
 That he would pray for him ; who answered : ' Nay,
 Pray for thyself ; for wherefore shouldst thou stay,
 And send another where thyself canst go ? '
 ' Nay, Brother Giles,' he pleaded, ' say not so :
 I am a sinner utterly estranged
 From God, but thou among His friends art ranged,
 And soon canst find Him for thyself and me.'
 To whom the Saint made answer : ' Verily
 If such a thing should happen, O my friend,
 As that Perugia's streets from end to end
 Were heaped with gold and silver, and anon
 Came word that whoso would might walk thereon,

And take of treasure to his heart's content,
Wouldst rather that a messenger were sent
To take thy portion for thee ?' ' Nay, not so,'
Quoth he, ' for certes I myself would go,
And, howso' loyal, trust no other wight.'
' Well,' quoth the holy man, ' thou'st answered right :
So is it concerning God : for all the earth
Is full of Him, and all of mortal birth
Can find Him. Go then, nor another send.'

A certain soldier, a familiar friend
Of Brother Giles, was by his counsel taught
Religion, and within the Order brought ;
Of whom the Saint thereafter took no heed,
Either by friendly speech or ghostly rede,
As he was wont of old : whereat dismayed
And all disconsolate the soldier said,
Complaining : ' Father, 'tis full strange perfay
That, while i' the world, I never day by day
Lacked of thy presence aught, but thou wouldest
teach,
Or else admonish me with holy speech ;
But, when I joined thine Order, thinking so
To have much more my fill of thee, then lo !
Thou say'st no word, whereat I marvel sore.
I would that thou wouldest learn me, if no more,
At least what thing to do, what leave undone.'
And Brother Giles made answer : ' Know, my son,
To the Lord's service thou art bound to-day,
And we but fight as comrades, and obey
One Master : wherefore, then, my bidding ask ?

Haply the Lord would lay on thee some task
Other than I should give thee to fulfil.
I might command thee this, and the Lord's will
Be otherwise.' Then, having said his say,
He stood with face turned heavenward, as to pray,
Talking with God : and him the soldier heard,
The while with fervour lingering on the word
He spake : ' How precious, Lord, is chastity,
That holy thing ! and how it pleaseth Thee !
How dear the soul that hath it for her own,
Whom in the heavenly kingdom Thou wilt crown ! '
Again, and lingering on the sound thereof :
' How pleaseth Thee the man who for Thy love
Hath left the world and all that is therein,
With heart estranged from father, mother, kin !
What joy to Thee obedience doth afford,
And he who keepeth Thy commandments, Lord ! '
Fourthly he said : ' How precious in Thy sight
The soul that, soaring to devotion's height,
There holdeth vigil, poised on sleepless wings,
For contemplation of celestial things !
How sweet the solace when from downcast eyes
Are shed the tears that open Paradise ! '

XLIV

HOW BROTHER GILES RECOVERED
FROM HIS WRATH AGAINST A
CERTAIN BROTHER

WHEN Brother Giles did in Cetona dwell,
And had a garden made replenished well
With goodly things, one day as he did stand
In the said garden, a small staff in hand,
Saying his paternoster, in there strayed
A Brother brandishing a naked blade,
Who 'gan these goodly matters to lay waste.
But Brother Giles, beholding it, made haste
Against the man, and, with great vehemence
Chiding, laid hands on him and drove him thence.
Then spake that Brother : ' Brother Giles,' quoth he,
' Where is thy patience and thy sanctity ? '
' O pardon me, my Brother,' he replies
Sighing, ' for thou didst take me by surprise
Full suddenly and off my guard, when I
Had doffed the sword, and laid mine armour by.'

XLV

HOW HE EXPOUNDED TO TWO
PREACHING FRIARS THE IN-
COMPARABLE GREATNESS OF
GOD

ANOTHER time, while tarrying in the same
Cetona; lo ! to visit him there came
Two preaching friars by devotion led :
And, as of God with him they communèd,
'O reverend Father, touching God,' said one,
'Great and high matter spake my lord saint John.'
And Brother Giles made answer : 'Naught perfay
Doth John of God in his evangel say.'
To whom that preacher : 'Father, have a care :
How say'st ? for Saint Augustine doth declare
That, had he struck a loftier note to men,
No one had understood him : say not then
That he spake naught.' Quoth Brother Giles anew :
'Saint John of God spake nothing.' Then the two,
Grieved and indignant, bade the Saint farewell.
But, being withdrawn from him a little spell,
The twain once more he summoned and bade mark
The mountain nigh Cetona, saying : 'Hark !
If now a mountain of heaped millet-seed
Matched yonder mass, and at its base should feed
A sparrow, eating all a sparrow may,

What, think ye, would he fetch from it each day,
Or in a month, or year, or thousand years ?'
' Nothing, so far as to the eye appears,
E'en in a thousand,' answered they. ' Quoth he :
' Yea, and so vast is God's immensity—
So huge a mountain—that Saint John, as small
As is a sparrow, saith no word at all
Matched with the Majesty of God.' Then they,
Seeing that Brother Giles but sooth did say,
Fell prostrate, and his clemency implored,
And eke for intercession with our Lord
Besought him. Therewithal much edified,
In uttermost devotion home they hied.

XLVI

HOW HE LOVED TO BE ALONE
WITH GOD

‘God and the soul,’ he said upon a tide,
 ‘Are best by bride and bridegroom typified :
 For he, when troth is plighted, sendeth her
 Joy-gifts and goodly raiment for to wear,
 And scrip, and other chattels : but, made one,
 These outward matters from that day forgone,
 He only is for her, and she for him.
 E’en so good works, like gifts and raiment trim,
 Are the soul’s ornaments, but prayer doth weld
 And make her one with God.’

A man of old
 Once asked of Brother Giles if this might chance,
 That soul of man in ecstasy or trance
 Should leave the body. Having answered yea.
 He added : ‘In the world there lives to-day
 Whose soul in rapture did the body quit.’
 Whereto that Brother said : ‘I trow that it
 Seemed grievous to return.’ And with a sigh
 Quoth Brother Giles : ‘In sooth thou dost not lie.’

And Brother Gratian too, a perfect man,
 Who dwelt with him as comrade for the span
 Of twice ten years, bare witness that no word
 In all that time from out his lips was heard
 Idle or vain. Said Brother Bernard eke

Of Quintavalle how that he would seek
Ever the shelter of his cell to pray.
Oft too before the Brothers would he say
Lightly that, what with ecstasies at whiles
And heavenly visitations, Brother Giles
Was but half human ; or, in jocund hour,
‘ The man is like a maid within her bower ’ ;
And once to Brother Giles in merry mood,
‘ Go talk with men, or bring the Brothers food
And all they need.’ And he in answer said
Meekly : ‘ It is not all who can be fed
On swallow’s fare, as Brother Bernard can
Of Quintavalle.’ For the rumour ran
That, e’en as swallow feedeth on the wing,
So too that Brother in his wandering
Through crowded street, or on the mountain-head,
Of heavenly rapture had his daily bread.

And shouted : ' Fear not, Father, all is well ;
I come to aid thee '—then, arrived the spot,
Inquired : ' What ails thee, Father ? ' ' Heed me not,'
He answered. But the other : ' Give me leave
To stay beside thee while the foe doth grieve
Thy spirit.' To whom Brother Giles : ' The Lord
For this thy gracious dealing thee reward,
That thou hast come ! It is enough ; now go,
Return thee to thy place.' And oftentimes so
The devil wont to vex him, so that when
Alone he 'gat him from the eyes of men,
And to his cell at eventide was come,
Sighing he said : ' I wait my martyrdom.'

XLVIII

OF A SPIRITUAL JOY WHICH WAS
VOUCHSAFED HIM

ONCE when the end was near, as from his cell
 He turned him, full of joy unspeakable,
 He said to a companion : ' Dear my son,
 What think you now of this ? for I have won
 A treasure of delight so manifold
 And so resplendent, as may not be told
 By any tongue of man.' And, saying this,
 He seemed so full of fervour and of bliss,
 As he were drunk with love of grace divine.

A certain Brother bade him come and dine,
 To whom with joy he answered : ' Here, my son,
 Is the best meat a man may feed upon.'
 And when that Brother, as to tempt him, cried :
 ' Heed not such matters, eat, be satisfied,'
 The holy man not lightly took the word,
 But thus made answer to the thing he heard :
 ' Brother, in this thou speakest to thy shame :
 Would rather thou hadst struck till the blood came ! '
 Needs must one think that this thrice saintly soul
 Felt that ere long, arrived her mortal goal,
 She should put off the body, to enjoy
 Her glorious treasure with no earth-alloy :
 For, many a day, by death's dear longing fired,

To be with Jesu Christ he had desired
In beatific rapture.

On a day

One told him how Saint Francis erst did say
The Brothers still should seek a martyr's death.
He answered : ' Better 'twere to yield my breath
Passing to God in ecstasy of thought.'
Nathless one time the Saracens he sought,
Hoping to perish at their hands ; but when,
Now home-arrived, his visionary ken
Soared to the height, he said : ' No more I sigh
To think I died not as the martyrs die.'

XLIX

HOW HE PROPHESIED THAT HE
WOULD NOT BE CANONIZED

Now when this holy man lay ill at ease,
Burdened with manifold infirmities—
As racking cough with aching chest and head—
And eke by burning fever visited,
Neither could eat, nor drink, nor sleep, and him,
For his sore sickness being faint of limb,
Needs must the Brothers to his pallet bear,
They of Perugia, made hereof aware,
Sent an armed band to guard him, lest that he,
When dead, should otherwhere transported be,
Nor rest, as fondly he had hoped and prayed,
Within Saint Mary's of the Angels laid.
So when these tidings reached the holy man,
Fired with prophetic fervour he began :
‘ Tell the Perugians nor for miracle
Nor canonizing ever will the bell
Be rung for me, nor any sign betide,
Save of the prophet Jona.’ They replied :
‘ E'en though he be not canonized, nathless
Fain would we have him for his saintliness.’

L

OF HIS MOST BLESSED DEATH

UPON the Vigil of Saint George, that night
Toward Matins being in yet sorer plight,
So that the Brothers had with tenderest touch,
And scarce a movement, borne him to his couch—
Eyes and lips closed—his spirit found release
From flesh, and passed into eternal peace.
O Father Giles thrice saintly, who that day
When first our Lord the task on thee did lay
To follow Him, and of Saint Francis don
The habit, two and fifty years agone—
E'en on Saint George's feast-day—didst ascend
To reign in heaven with Him that hath no end
And no beginning, think of us whom here
Forlorn thou leavest to such grief and fear.

LI

OF A MARVELLOUS VISION WHICH
A HOLY MAN SAW OF BROTHER
GILES

THERE was a holy man who, rapt in prayer,
Saw Brother Giles in vision mount through air,
And many a Brother else, who died that time,
Issue from Purgatory and soar sublime
To heaven. And our Lord Jesu Christ did go
Upon the clouds to welcome him, and lo !
Attendant on His state there streamed along
A mighty convoy of the angel-throng,
Who with great honour and much minstrelsy
Bore him triumphant to the realm on high.

LII

OF THE REVELATION OF A BROTHER
PREACHER AND THE GLORY OF
BROTHER GILES

WHEN Brother Giles was sick, it came to pass
A Brother of the Preaching Friars there was,
Who in a Convent of their Order lay
Sick also. And a Brother who did stay
Beside him, as his own familiar friend,
Begged of the sick man, as he neared his end,
That after death, were our Lord's pleasure so,
He would reveal his state for him to know.
Which having promised, on the selfsame day
As Brother Giles this Preacher passed away.
And after death he to his friend appeared,
Who asked him of his state, and how he fared.
'Right well,' he answered, 'for the day that I
Passed from the earth, a holy man did die,
Whose name was Brother Giles ; and so sufficed
His passing sanctity, that Jesu Christ
Suffered all souls in Purgatory pent—
With whom I also was in great torment—
To go with him to Paradise : and me
Thus did the merits of the Saint set free.'
His fellow, loth the matter to declare,
Fell into grievous sickness, but made ware

That he thus sickened for revealing not
Of Brother Giles the glory, soon I wot
Let call the Brothers Minor, the which came
Full ten in number: and he told the same
Devoutly both to these, and not a few
Of his own Order: and 'twas proven true
That Brother Giles had died upon that day.

So from this world passed Brother Giles away
I' the year from our Lord's Incarnation
Twelve hundred sixty-two, and, as was shewn,
Two years and fifty sith his vows were plight,
Upon the feast-day of Saint George, at night.
Of whom my Lord Bonaventura spake,
Being Chief Minister—and in his wake
The Cardinal—that through his whole life's space
He did all things devoutly by God's grace
Touching the soul, and after life was done,
Flashed forth in miracle.

Now when he was gone,
They of Perugia cast about for stones,
And found at last, wherein to lay his bones,
A sepulchre, to wit, of marble made,
With Jona's story graven and portrayed;
Which all men, mindful of his prophecy,
Took for clear token of his sanctity.
So, the said tomb with honour o'er him raised,
God for his Saint they glorified and praised.

Here endeth the life of Brother Giles, friend of God.

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